

MARY SHELLEY



MARY SHELLEY AT NINETEEN

MARY
SHELLEY

A Biography

BY
R. GLYNN GRYLLS



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PREFACE



THE whereabouts of Mary Shelley's Journal and most of her manuscripts has been for some time generally unknown. Together with Shelley's manuscripts and relics of interest they were preserved at Boscombe Manor by Sir Percy Florence Shelley, the poet's son, who had moved there from Field Place, Sussex, in 1849. His widow, Jane, Lady Shelley, divided them at her death between three beneficiaries on the following general principle, but with considerable overlapping: the Journal and most of Mary Shelley's manuscripts and letters to her heir (Boscombe MSS. A);¹ Shelley's manuscripts and the more important relics to the Bodleian Library (Boscombe MSS. B); Shelley's letters and certain of his manuscripts to the heir to the Shelley baronetcy (Boscombe MSS. S).

It is from Boscombe MSS. A, which has been for some time unavailable, that I am able to reproduce here certain unpublished material and to check what has been previously used. The collection contains the Journal, manuscripts of *Frankenstein* and some short stories, collections of correspondence, and other Shelleyana. The Journal begun on July 28th, 1814, was first kept jointly by Shelley and Mary, but from the third volume the entries are exclusively written by Mary.² There are five different manuscript books, the fly-leaves containing much scribbling of figures and Shelley's drawings of trees; and in each book sets of pages have been torn out.

Correspondence includes letters to Mary from Byron, Trelawny, Claire, and Charles Clairmont, and a series of eighty-five letters from Tom Moore. I have quoted freely from these letters where they have been previously unpublished, and I have reproduced for the first time letters from Hogg's correspondence with Sir Percy and Lady Shelley on his *Life of the*

¹ I have given the collections these names for convenience of reference in the text.

² For fuller description see Appendix B.

poet, and two unpublished letters to Lady Shelley from Robert Louis Stevenson.

Other unpublished manuscripts used here are letters from Mary Wollstonecraft, S. T. Coleridge, W. T. Baxter, Mrs. Hoppner, Allegra, Trelawny, Captain Roberts, Mrs. Gisborne, Sir Percy Florence Shelley, and Lady Shelley. There is also a complete letter from Shelley of which only two paragraphs have been previously published.

In the Boscombe MSS. A collection there are also two copies of *Shelley and Mary*. After Lady Shelley (wife of Sir Percy Shelley, the poet's son) had published the *Memoirs* in 1859 she collected 'all the letters and other documents of a biographical character at present (January 1862) in the hands of Shelley's representatives' in the privately printed editions of *Shelley and Mary*, not to be published for thirty years after her death. The foreword to these volumes by Sir Percy Florence Shelley is quoted on page 269 and on pages 269-70. I have given a transcript of the long note in Lady Shelley's handwriting about the separation from Harriet which fills the three blank fly-leaves of the first volume in each of the series that I have been able to consult. In these series, also, a neat incision has been made at page 612 and two lines cut out.

With the help of Mr. R. H. Hill of the Bodleian Library, I have been able to trace the whereabouts of ten of these volumes, of which, according to the late T. J. Wise, twelve copies were printed in all. I should be glad of any information about the remaining copies.

The Bodleian Library	2	(One from Lady Shelley: a printer's final proof. One formerly in possession of Sir Henry Taylor.)
Lord Abinger	2	
Sir John Shelley-Rolls	1	
University of Texas	1	
Mr. T. J. Wise	1	(The copy given by Lady Shelley to Dowden.)
Pforzheimer Collection	2	
Huntington Library	1	

By permission of Bodley's Librarian and of the Curators of the Bodleian Library I have been able to consult and make use of the reserved manuscripts, for which under the terms of Lady Shelley's Will they are responsible. I am very grateful to Mr. R. H. Hill for allowing me to quote letters that he has transcribed and edited in *The Shelley Correspondence in the Bodleian Library*.

Through the kindness of Sir John Shelley-Rolls, for whose interest and always helpful advice I should like to express my gratitude, I have also been able to make use of papers in Boscombe MSS. S. In particular I must thank him for permission to reproduce the sketch of Shelley made by West which he recently acquired and which is of considerable interest as a new portrait. Other reproductions made from Sir John's collection are acknowledged in the text.

I have made use of the materials to which I have had access to check already available documents (e.g. the Keats letter, page 126; Shelley's letter about Harriet, December 16th, 1816, page 75; Mary's letter to Mrs. Hoppner, August 10th, 1821, page 151); to supplement information about Mary Shelley's later life and to complete the life-stories of those to whom Shelley was the sun about which their planets revolved. Hitherto unpublished letters from Hogg, the Clairmonts, Trelawny, tell their own story of 'what happened afterwards'. I am much indebted to Mrs. Marshall's biography, *The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 1889, and to Shelley's chief biographer, Dowden, and his devoted editor, the late Roger Ingpen. I have not given references to letters in their readily available texts except to note manuscript variations or to point out differences in the less accessible Julian edition of Shelley's letters, edited by Ingpen.

I should like to thank the Honourable Mrs. Bray for the help which she has given me and the information which she has supplied with regard to Sir Percy Florence and Lady Shelley and the friends who were entertained at Boscombe Manor and Shelley House. Through her kindness, and by permission of

Lord Abinger, I am able to reproduce the portrait of Godwin in her possession, and photographs of Sir Percy and Lady Shelley.

I am particularly grateful to Mr. M. Buxton Forman for permission to make use of copyright material of his father's, the late H. Buxton Forman; to Sir John Murray for extracts from unpublished letters from Mary Shelley to Byron in his possession; to the President of Magdalen and his publishers, Messrs. Grayson and Grayson, Limited, for permission to include material relating to Mary Shelley and Hogg from the forthcoming *Shelley Letters*; to Miss Sylva Norman for setting me on many tracks and for permission to use references to Hogg from *After Shelley*; to M. Koszul for quotations from *La Jeunesse de Shelley*, one of the most sympathetic studies of Shelley's early life; to Professor Frederick L. Jones of Mercer University, Macon, Georgia, for access to material that he has found in his researches for Mary Shelley's Collected Letters; to Mr. A. C. Grylls for copying material at the British Museum; to Miss Veronica Lucas, the fortunate owner of a villa next door to Shelley's in Bagni di Lucca, for the loan of books; to Miss May Wedderburn Cannan for her criticism and help; to Mr. Frederick Page of the Oxford University Press, who has most graciously saved me from many sins of commission and of omission and is not responsible for any that remain; to Mr. Ronald Fuller, author of *Literary Appreciation and Craftsmanship*, for contemporary literary references.

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INTRODUCTION



WHATEVER her limitations and in whatever she may have failed, Mary Shelley remains an Individual. And it places her alone among the women Shelley knew and at times loved, as the one worthy to be his wife. Both he and she were Individuals and not Types. Inevitably they suffered for this as they tried to evade the penalty of isolation that it involved; but they were not made to be comfortable members of a community, not even of a home circle: Shelley because he never learned not to be disappointed at man's imperfectibility, and Mary for the conflict there was in her nature between the feminine and the artist. Instead of resolving this, she too often took the way of escape, by trying to adapt herself to standards that were too narrow. That she did so is understandable enough. Bohemianism of any kind could not be expected to hold much charm for her. She paid too dearly for the vagabondage in Italy that a Trelawny might find romantic, and she had known the Godwin household too well to retain any illusions as to the sweetness of its disorder, while the shoddy glamour of a Byron's life, 'lauded and belorded' in Venice, was something for which neither she nor Shelley had any taste; they were out of his company, out and above.

There is poetic, if not historic, truth in the story that when she was reproached for sending her son to Harrow rather than to some school where he would learn to think for himself, Mary said: 'For heaven's sake, let him learn to think like everyone else!'¹ This is what she was always trying to do herself, and her character cannot be understood except in the light of

¹ Cf. Su Tung-p'o, A.D. 1036-1101 (*A hundred and seventy Chinese poems*, trans. Arthur Waley):

Families, when a child is born,
Want it to be intelligent.
I, through intelligence,
Having wrecked my whole life,

Only hope the baby will prove
Ignorant and stupid.
Then he will crown a tranquil life
By becoming a Cabinet minister.

the conflict, for it led her to do things misunderstood by friends at the time, and interpreted by some biographers since to show that she and Shelley were estranged at the end. This I do not believe to have been the case.

No doubt if Mary could have thought like everybody else, she would have been happier—but she couldn't. Shelley had fanned the small flame of the artist in her and had inspired her to create and execute her *Frankenstein*. She could never give up hope of repeating that experience; and the circumstances of her later life, the need to earn a living by her pen and the haunting desire to write a worthy life of her husband, encouraged it. She might have found herself in devotion to her son if her maternal instinct had not been disorientated by the early deaths of Clara and William which tinged her emotions with morbid apprehension and anxiety, so that she dared not lavish on Percy Florence the affection she felt. In an unpublished passage of the *Journal* she wrote in 1824:

My child! When you were ill, I thought that while you enjoyed health I could never be unhappy—you are clever, good, affectionate and beautiful—why does not your form fill my sense—your existence suffice for my content. When you are a few years older—yet I pray God I may not live to endure the vicissitudes of those years. . . . I *know* that no good can come to me. . . .

And Maria Gisborne, a wise friend to the last, had to beg her not to be influenced by her own 'blighted hopes' but to give herself up freely to 'the most pure of human attachments':

¹. . . however presumptive it may seem in me to pretend to offer advice to one so much my superior in mental powers, I still cannot help doing so. Let friendship, love, or the superiority of years, if you please, be my excuse; it is this, 'that you should not by any means either check the warmth of your feelings towards him or even intimate to him the least distrust of the durability of his affection for you'. I am of opinion that the anticipation of evil does much towards bringing it about.

¹ Unpublished letter, October 12th, 1832. Boscombe MSS. A.

Mary was always fundamentally divided, though her exceptional powers of self-control forbade much of the inner struggle to appear on the surface. With one of her severest modern critics we may say, 'she belonged to the hapless tribe of mortals who live like ghosts between one world and another, Madam Facing-both-ways', or put it less harshly,

But—there are wanderers in the middle mist,
Who cry for shadows, clutch, and cannot tell
Whether they love at all, or, loving, whom:
 . . . They doubt, and sigh,
And do not love at all. Of these am I.²

But her love for Shelley was no shadow that Mary clutched at and let go. She would never have failed him and he would always have returned to her, but, if she could have met him as Elizabeth Barrett met Robert Browning, when her character was formed and not while it was still in an uncomfortable adolescence, the course of their life together would have been smoother. As it was, Shelley's death, which she took to be the end of her development, was really the beginning of it.

It was inevitable to one of her complexity of nature that she took some time to mature; it was, besides, not an easy matter for the wife of Shelley, himself one of the rare spirits about whom the shades of the prison-house never close. He had the inner flame that dazzles them to nothingness. Mary had not so whole a spirit, but at least she had a character capable of development, and that is a good deal more than could be said of any of the other women of the 'Pisa Circle'! Cast them in a play; how easy it would be to go to any intelligent brunette for an adequate representation of Claire; a pretty provincial, good-hearted, but profound only in her limitations, for Harriet; a beautiful creature with a smattering of culture and a Latin sense of the *sympathique* for Emilia Viviani; the ordinary predatory female disguised as a good wife and mother for Jane Williams. But who would play Mary and who would play Shelley? What

¹ Mr. H. G. Massingham, *The Friend of Shelley—a Memoir of Trelawny*, p. 195.

² Rupert Brooke—*Sonnet* ('I said I splendidly loved you').

vitality would be needed, what range and what depth! For the personality of each was full of colour, but while with Shelley the kaleidoscope was complete, with Mary the shades were still forming into their true harmony. There must be movement, there must be friction, when such a process is taking place, and if we would do anything but paint our characters an uncompromising black or white we must be prepared to show them so. 'In tragic life, God wot, no villain need be'—nor will there be a complete hero either, if we are honest. The important thing is that in essentials Mary and Shelley were at one.

We can divide all human relationship and all living into the Noumenal and the Phenomenal. The latter stands for whatever is trivial, passing, and insignificant; we can recognize its quality easily enough, for it makes up most of the terms of our existence. The Noumenal applies to those experiences in which we know we have touched reality, when we feel we are most truly ourselves and when in personal relationships we are aware that through the contact of true communion we have registered a moment in eternity. For our immortality is surely in those experiences which we know to be significant, to which we can return at will and know that they will endure: immutable and indestructible moments in a sphere that is not the one in which we usually move and have our being; a sphere, not in an after life, but in another life.

And the love between Mary and Shelley was of the Noumenal; the beauty of its first flowering and the strength of its growth through the difficulties and sorrows they faced together were two sides of the one reality. In a profound sense they belonged to one another, for each, through the other, had hold of something that could not be taken away.

It is not chance affection. We are one
And for all time shall be. Nor can you fail
Because a something stronger than ourselves
Has kept each moment that we cast adrift
Upon eternity.

PART 1
CHILDHOOD

1797-1814



*They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.
I wonder not—for One then left this earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
Of its departing glory; still her fame
Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim
The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.*

SHELLEY

Dedication to the 'Revolt of Islam'.

I

1797

~~~~~

WHEN Somers Town could be seen 'across two fields from the trunks of the trees at Camden Town', there were two households at twenty doors apart; in one of them, 7 Evesham Buildings, lived William Godwin, the author of *Political Justice*, and in the other, The Polygon, lived Mary Wollstonecraft, who became his wife on March 29th, 1797. Although Godwin had denied one of the main principles of his philosophy in submitting to the institution of matrimony, he and his wife were determined to put into practice his precept against the risks to happiness involved in 'co-habitation', by which he meant literally sharing a roof. If they intended to avoid the domestic friction which may come from familiarity, they were also agreed in 'condemning the notion prevalent in many situations in life that a man and his wife cannot visit in mixed society but in company with each other; and we rather sought occasion of deviating from, than in complying with the rule'. They kept it well:

February 17th, 1797.

'Did I not see you, friend Godwin, at the theatre last night? I thought I met a smile, but you went out without looking round. We expect you at half past four.'

Notes borrowing anything from 'the second volume of Caleb and a bit of Indian rubber' to a portion of last night's supper 'as I am to be a partaker of your worldly goods', passed along the street, but in spite of separate households domestic difficulties sometimes arose. A few days after their wedding Mary wrote:

April 11th.

I am not well to-day; my spirits have been harassed. Mary will tell you about the state of the sink, &c. Do you know you plague

<sup>1</sup> Letters to and from Godwin quoted here, except when otherwise stated, are from *William Godwin*, by C. Kegan Paul, 1876.

me—a little—by not speaking more determinately to the landlord, of whom I have a mean opinion. . . .

I wish you would desire Mr. Marshal to call on me. Mr. Johnson or somebody has always taken the disagreeable business of settling with tradespeople off my hands. I am perhaps as unfit as yourself to do it, and my time appears to me as valuable as that of other persons accustomed to employ themselves. Things of this kind are easily settled with money I know; but I am tormented by the want of money, and feel, to say the truth, as if I was not treated with respect, owing to your desire not to be disturbed.

Mary Wollstonecraft did not want to exchange, for the benefits of Godwin's legal guardianship, the friendships and assistance she had known before her marriage. Of the friends she mentioned here, Marshall was a scholar who acted as amanuensis for Godwin and lived with him from time to time, and Johnson was Mary's publisher. It was he who had advised her to use her time in Ireland as governess to the Kingsborough children to perfect her knowledge of French, and when she returned from there he made it possible for her to live independently by giving her translation and literary work. He published her first book, a novel called *Mary*, which was an autobiographical account of her friendship with Fanny Blood, and followed it by *Original Stories from Real Life*, illustrated by Blake's woodcuts.

Thus launched on a literary career, she employed the next four years that she lived in London (1787-91) in writing *The Rights of Women*, translating from the Dutch, German, and French, contributing numerous articles to the *Analytical Review*, and trouncing, as mercilessly as Paine was to do later, sentimentalists who pitied the Plumage but forgot the Dying Bird in her *Answer to Burke*. 'She was incapable of disguise', wrote Johnson; 'whatever was the state of her mind, it appeared when she entered, and the tone of conversation might easily be guessed. When harassed, which was very often the case, she was relieved by unbosoming herself, and generally returned home calm, frequently in spirits. . . .'

The drudgery of her early youth that succeeded a childhood of privation and misery had allowed Mary Wollstonecraft little time for the luxuries of emotion, and it was not until she was about thirty and freed from the restrictions of poverty and uncongenial surroundings that she awoke to her own physical attractions. The first effect of this was a romantic devotion to Fuseli, the artist, which, whether genuine and deep-rooted or not, was sufficiently embarrassing to her friends for them to persuade her to leave London for a while. Accordingly in 1792 she went alone to Paris, where she unfortunately attracted the attention of Captain Imlay and, her intelligence powerless in her present mood to come to the rescue of her emotional inexperience, succumbed to his practised charm. They lived together in Paris and later at Havre, where their daughter Fanny was born in the spring of 1794. Very soon afterwards Imlay's affections began to waver; Mary's tour to the Scandinavian countries on business for him did nothing to improve relations when she returned, and he finally deserted her.

Desperate at first, she contemplated suicide and attempted to drown herself by jumping from Putney Bridge, but the loving care of her friends gradually restored her, and she set about earning a living for herself and Fanny. She refused to accept an allowance from Imlay. 'I never wanted but your heart; that gone you have nothing more to give. Forgive me, if I say that I shall consider any direct or indirect attempt to supply my necessities as an insult I have not merited, and as rather done out of tenderness for your own reputation than for me.'

In the London society of what we should now call the 'left-wing' literary set Mary Wollstonecraft soon met Godwin. He warmly admired the *Letters from Norway*, although he had been critical of her early work, and at their first meeting he considered that she had talked down Tom Paine, whom he had come to hear, and who was at the best of times a shy and silent man. But further meetings soon changed his first impression;

and the development of their acquaintance is told in Godwin's own words:

The partiality we conceived for each other was in that mode which I have always considered as the purest, and most refined style of love. It grew with equal advances in the mind of each. It would have been impossible for the most minute observer to have said who was before and who was after. One sex did not take the priority which long established custom has awarded it, nor the other overstep that delicacy which is so severely imposed. I am not conscious that either party can assume to have been the agent or the patient, the toil spreader or the prey, in the affair. When, in the course of things, the disclosure came, there was nothing, in a manner, for either party to disclose to the other. . . . There was no period of throes and resolute explanation attendant on the tale. It was friendship melting into love.

Mary Wollstonecraft, intellectual and beautiful, who had dared to live as unconventionally as Godwin wrote, and William Godwin, whose *Political Justice* was the gospel of the reformers—their friends hoped great things of the union. It did not seem a gross exaggeration at the time for a friend of Thomas Wedgwood to call them the two greatest men of their time, and for the mother of Sir Henry Taylor to write to her husband later:<sup>1</sup> So you really have seen Godwin and had little Mary in your arms! the only offspring of a union that will certainly be matchless in the present generation.

And the union was happy. Minor differences that arose from Mary's over-sensitiveness were as nothing compared with the continuous growth and deepening of their affection. 'Co-habitation' would not have overstrained it; rather, by more frequent domestic contacts, Godwin would have quieted Mary and Mary would have humanized Godwin. Before they were married Mary had written:

November 16th 1796.

<sup>2</sup>I send you your household linen. I am not sure that I did not feel a sensation of pleasure at thus acting the part of a wife though you

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Taylor, *Autobiography* (1885), i. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished Boscombe MSS. A.

have so little respect for the character. There is such a magic in affection that I have been more gratified by your clasping your hands round my arm in company than I could have been by all the admiration in the world tho' I am a woman—and to mount a step higher in the scale of vanity, an author. I shall call towards 1 o'clock not to deprive the world of your bright thoughts this exhilarating day.

MARY.

A pleasant side of Godwin's character comes out in references to Fanny:

(Mary to Godwin):

April 20th 1797.

Fanny is delighted with the thought of dining with you. But I wish you to eat your meat first, and let her come up with the pudding. I shall probably knock at your door in my way to Opie's; but should I not find you, let me request you not to be too late this evening. Do not give Fanny butter with her pudding.

And there is evidence of the same vein of tenderness in Godwin's references to the child they are expecting ('Master William'), when he writes to Mary during his tour of the Midlands with Wedgwood:

Stratford-upon-Avon, June 5th 1797.

... And now, my dear love, what do you think of me? Do you not find solitude infinitely superior to the company of a husband? Will you give me leave to return to you again when I have finished my pilgrimage, and discharged the penance of absence? Take care of yourself, my love, and take care of William. ... Tell Fanny something about me. Ask where she thinks I am. Say I am in a great way and going further and further, but that I shall turn round to come back again some day. Tell her I have not forgotten her little mug, and that I shall choose a very pretty one. ...

And Mary writes to him:

Tuesday, June 6th.

... I was not quite well the day after you left me; but it is past, and I am well and tranquil, excepting the disturbance produced by Master William's joy, who took it into his head to frisk a little at being informed of your remembrance. I begin to love this little

creature, and to anticipate his birth as a fresh twist to a knot which I do not wish to untie. Men are spoilt by frankness, I believe, yet I must tell you that I love you better than I supposed I did, when I promised to love you for ever. . . . I am not fatigued with solitude, yet I have not relished my solitary dinner. A husband is a convenient part of the furniture of a house, unless he be a clumsy fixture. I wish you, from my soul, to be riveted in my heart; but I do not desire to have you always at my elbow, although at this moment I should not care if you were. Yours truly and tenderly,

MARY.

Mary Wollstonecraft had never been a hard-faced 'blue-stocking', and she would have been willing to come to depend more and more on her husband. And Godwin, from giving good advice, would have grown to accept fuller responsibilities. If she would have humanized him, she would also have strengthened him.

But in the late summer of 1797 there was no maid running with notes along the street, nor was Godwin sitting with his books in No. 7, forgetful of his dinner. For, on August 30th, Mary had given birth, not to William, but to a daughter, and her condition, which had been satisfactory enough at the time, was growing dangerous. Dr. Poignard had been called in by the midwife, Mrs. Blenkinsop, whom Mary had preferred should attend her, and now there were also Dr. Fordyce and Dr. Clarke and Mr. (afterwards Sir Anthony) Carlisle. Two women friends, Mrs. Fenwick and Miss Hays, helped the professional nurse, and Godwin hardly left his wife's room. If his *Journal* for the ten days of agony seems laconic, the lines and dashes of the wordless final entry in a book that is everywhere punctiliously kept are evidence of suppressed emotion that was not cold.

Aug. 30, W.—'Mary' p. 116.<sup>a</sup> Fell and Dyson call: dine at Reveley's: Fenwicks and M. sup: Blenkinsop. Birth of Mary, 20 minutes after 11 at night. From 7 to 10, Evesham Buildings.

(a) This refers to Mary Wollstonecraft's novel *Mary*.

- Aug. 31, Th.—Fetch Dr. Poignard: Fordyce calls: in the evening Miss G. and L. J. M. Reveley and Tuthil: J. G. calls.
- Sep. 1, F.—Call on Robinson, Nicholson, Carlisle, and M. Hays: Johnson calls: favourable appearances.
- „ 2, Sa.—Carlisle, Montagu, Tuthil, and M. Reveley call: worse in the evening. Nurse.
- „ 3, Su.—Montagu breakfasts: call with him on Wolcot, Opie, Laurence and Dr. Thompson. Shivering fits: Fordyce twice. Poignard, Blenkinsop and nurse.
- „ 4, M.—Blenkinsop: puppies. [Dr. Fordyce now forbade the patient to nurse her child, and puppies were employed to draw off the milk.] Johnson and Nicholson call: Masters calls. E. Fenwick and M. sleep. M. Hays calls. Pichegru arrested.
- „ 5, Tu.—Fordyce twice: Clarke in the afternoon. M. Hays calls.
- „ 6, W.—Carlisle calls: wine diet: Carlisle from Brixton: Miss Jones sleeps.
- „ 7, Th.—Barry, Reveley and Lowry call: dying in the evening.
- „ 8, F.—Opie and Tuthil call. Idea of death: solemn communication. Barry: Miss G. sleeps.
- „ 9, Sa.—Talk to her of Fanny and Mary: Barry.
- „ 10, Su.—20 minutes before 8 . . . . .
- . . . . .
- . . . . .

Her two friends bore testimony to the peace and beauty of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin's last hours. Miss Hays<sup>1</sup> wrote:

... Her whole soul seemed to dwell with anxious fondness on her friends; and her affections, which were at all times more alive than perhaps those of any other human being, seemed to gather new disinterestedness upon this trying occasion. The attachment and regret of those who surrounded her appeared to increase every hour, and if her principles are to be judged of by what I saw of her death, I should say that no principles could be more conducive to calmness and consolation.

<sup>1</sup> See reference in note 2, p. 231.

And Mrs. Fenwick<sup>1</sup> wrote to Everina Wollstonecraft, Mary's sister:

... No woman was ever more happy in marriage than Mrs. Godwin. Who ever endured more anguish than Mr. Godwin endures? Her description of him, in the very last moments of her recollection was, 'He is the kindest, best man in the world'.

I know of no consolations for myself, but in remembering how happy she had lately been, and how much she was admired, and almost idolized, by some of the most eminent and best of human beings.

The children are both well, the infant in particular. It is the finest baby I ever saw.

## II

1797-1812



A MR. NICHOLSON, neighbour of Godwin's, and an enthusiastic student of Lavater's *Speculations on Physiognomy*, examined the baby when she was not three weeks old and wrote the following report to her father:

Newman Street, September 18.

Dear Sir. . . . I am disposed to think the following imperfect observation may lead you to more than a suspicion that our organization at the birth may greatly influence those motives which govern the series of our future acts of intelligence, and that we may even possess moral habits, acquired during the foetal state.

1. The outline of the head viewed from above, its profile, the outline of the forehead, seen from behind and in its horizontal positions, are such as I have invariably and exclusively seen in subjects who possessed considerable memory and intelligence.

2. The base of the forehead, the eyes and eyebrows, are familiar to me in subjects of quick sensibility, irritable, scarcely irascible, and surely not given to rage. That part of the outline of the forehead, which is very distinct in patient investigators, is less so in her.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Fenwick's husband had been tutor to Francis Place and was author of *A Tour through the Batavian Republic*. He is Ralph Bigod in Lamb's *Two Races of Men*.

I think her powers, of themselves, would lead to speedy combination, rather than continued research.

3. The lines between the eyes have much expression, but I had not time to develop them. They simply confirmed to me the inductions in the late paragraph.

4. The form of the nose, the nostrils, its insertion between the eyes, and its changes by muscular action, together with the side of the face in which the characteristic marks of affection are most prominent, were scarcely examined. Here also is much room for meditation and remark.

\*6. The mouth was too much employed to be well observed. It has the outlines of intelligence. She was displeased, and it denoted much more of resigned vexation than either scorn or rage.

On this imperfect sight it would be silly to risk a character; for which reason I will only add that I conjecture that her manner may be petulant in resistance, but cannot be sullen. . . .

Mary might show these early signs of exceptional intelligence and Mrs. Fenwick might write enthusiastically to her Aunt, but to Godwin she presented a problem with which he was completely unprepared to deal.

(To Mrs. Cotton)

October 24th. 1797.

. . . The poor children! I am myself totally unfitted to educate them. The scepticism which perhaps sometimes leads me right in matters of speculation, is torment to me when I would attempt to direct the infant mind. I am the most unfit person for this office; she was the best qualified in the world. . . .

His protestations and self-pity are evidence more of the strain of irresponsibility in his character than of genuine incapacity; for he had not only often expressed his theories of education in writing, but had put them into practice. As a young man he had taken a relation, Tom Cooper, into his house to educate. The guardianship had not been altogether a success on account of Godwin's excessive conscientiousness which harassed the boy; for then, as later, he was at his best when he could give advice without accepting fuller responsibility.

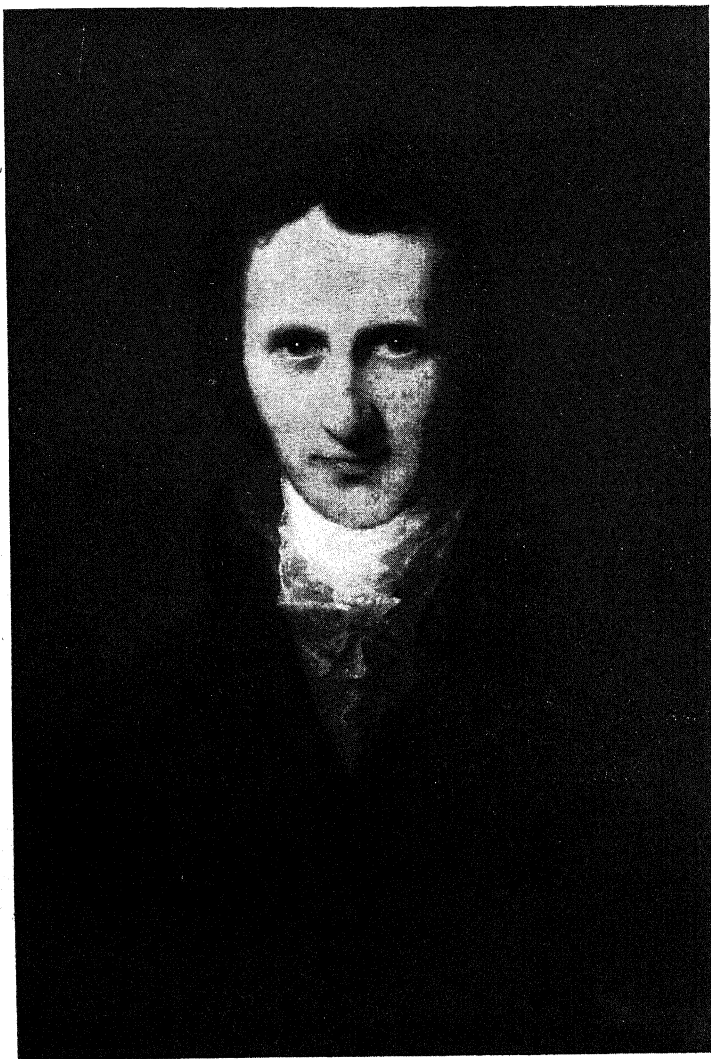
(a) No. 5 not given.

However appalled he might be by the undertaking now ahead of him, Godwin did his immediate duty and took up his residence at The Polygon, appointing a relative, Miss Jones, to the arduous and diverse duties of nurse and housekeeper. In spite of the help given her by friends like Maria Reveley<sup>1</sup> and sometimes Mr. Marshall, who would take the children off her hands, the financial insecurity of Godwin's position and his habits of 'open house' made Miss Jones's lot far from easy. Nor did she gain the reward she might have expected, for, when Godwin decided that it was his duty to marry again, he was not guided solely by altruism, and it was in more ambitious quarters that he made his first advances. After a six weeks' acquaintance he proposed to Miss Harriet Lee, who with her sister Sophia was joint authoress of *Canterbury Tales* and kept a school at Bath. But Miss Lee refused his offer and broke off the acquaintance. Nor was he any more fortunate with Maria Reveley, to whom he next proposed, little more than a month after her husband's death. 'Maria Reveley had been a favourite pupil, a dear friend, a woman whose beauty and manner he ardently admired,' wrote Mary later. And from the point of view of Mary and Fanny it was ever to be regretted that Maria, high-spirited and unconventional, but even-tempered and with a mind alert for knowledge, did not become their step-mother; but her inspired clear-sightedness did not fail her when it afforded her a glimpse of the man Godwin was to become, and she chose instead to marry John Gisborne.

It is a high tragedy of character that the Godwin of his prime, the author of *Political Justice* and the husband of Mary Wollstonecraft, should have become the shuffling hypocrite and needy spendthrift of a dishonourable old age. The portrait of him by Lawrence<sup>2</sup> shows a man whom we can recognize as the friend of Bentham, Coleridge, Lamb, the outstanding

<sup>1</sup> Later Mrs. Gisborne.

<sup>2</sup> Reproduced here for the first time; he is generally known by the later portrait by Northcote.



WILLIAM GODWIN

*From a portrait attributed to Lawrence*



reformers and men of letters of his day, the philosopher who befriended and advised young men and inspired Shelley. It is well to keep that picture in mind as we follow the course of his degeneration, till we shake a head with Emerson—'it takes a great deal of elevation of thought to produce very little elevation of life'.

Nothing contributed to the moral consumption of his spirit so much as his vanity, and this led him to take the first step downward when it so obscured his judgement as to make him choose Mrs. Clairmont for Mary Wollstonecraft's successor. A widow of middle age, shrewd, and with the vestiges of some attraction, she had come to live next door to 'The Polygon', with her two young children, Charles and Jane. It is a measure of her intelligence and of her character that she introduced herself to Godwin by exclaiming from her balcony: 'Is it possible that I behold the immortal Godwin?'

She secured her husband and married him, without any scruples for *Political Justice*, in 1801. In 1802 she gave birth to a son, William. No doubt a father's satisfaction in the perpetuation of his name blinded Godwin to the irony of the circumstances, as he was blind to much else: the necessity for some regular means of supply to fill the needs of so large a household, for instance, and the incapacity of his wife to make his home a happy place for his children. He made no attempt at control and left all decisions to her, even when they affected Mary. The following passage from a letter about a proposed stay by the sea for her health is typical:

When I do not answer any of the lesser points in your letters, it is because I fully agree with you, and therefore do not think it necessary to draw out an answer point by point, but am content to assent by silence. . . . It shall be so, if it can, and undoubtedly I conceived you, on the spot, most competent to select the residence.

And several years later we find him writing to an unknown correspondent, with an uneasy evasiveness as near to shame as he ever got:

Your enquiries relate principally to the two daughters of Mary

Wollstonecraft. They are neither of them brought up with an exclusive attention to the system of their mother. . . . The present Mrs. Godwin has great strength and activity of mind, but is not exclusively a follower of their mother; and indeed, having formed a family establishment without having a previous provision for the support of a family, neither Mrs. Godwin nor I have leisure enough for reducing novel theories of education to practice, while we both of us honestly endeavour, as far as our opportunities will permit, to improve the minds and characters of the younger branches of our family. . . .

This refusal to face facts, or to accept responsibility for those that he could not avoid, led him into what was to be the cause of fatal embarrassments when in 1805 he let Mrs. Godwin persuade him to go into business.

The commercial undertaking which most naturally offered itself was a magazine of books for the use and amusement of children, and my wife, with a sagacity commensurate to her forecast, pitched upon a person singularly well qualified to superintend the details of the concern. . . .

The publishing firm<sup>1</sup> was opened at a little house in Hanway Street and in 1807 moved to larger premises in Skinner Street, Holborn, where the family went to live also. But despite sanguine hopes and hard work the firm did not prosper. Its productions were good, and we owe to it the *Tales from Shakespeare* of Charles and Mary Lamb, and the translation of *The Swiss Family Robinson*,<sup>2</sup> besides other children's books which have been undeservedly forgotten, Godwin's own classical *Fables* and Hazlitt's *English Grammar* amongst them. But, unfortunately, neither the generosity of Wedgwood nor the contributions of less wealthy friends could provide the necessary capital for a successful undertaking, and the twenty years of its existence are a record of disaster. Praiseworthy on the

<sup>1</sup> The business went under the name of M. J. Godwin & Co.; Baldwin was the pseudonym for Godwin's own contributions to the Juvenile Library.

<sup>2</sup> A copy of the first edition in English was sold in March 1936 for £225. The original was written by Johann Rudolf Wyss, and first published at Zürich in 1812.

part of Mrs. Godwin as an effort to provide for their maintenance, the venture was nevertheless one that Godwin should have known his own limitations better than ever to have attempted.

To be fair to Mrs. Godwin also, with regard to her step-children, she had many cares on her hands which would have made it difficult for a woman of the most sympathetic nature to devote much understanding to them, and it is to her credit that she never neglected their health. That she favoured her own daughter, Jane, was only to be expected, as it was also natural that the other two should resent the presence of outsiders and their own relegation to the background. Mary felt this more than Fanny, who was of a pliable disposition and did not dislike domesticity. There is a typical glimpse of Fanny in a letter from Godwin when his wife was on holiday with Mary and her own children.

May 30th 1811.

. . . Fanny conducts herself delightfully, and I am what you call comfortable. But I cannot look with the sanguine temper I could wish on the prospect before us. . . . No effort, no invention of mine shall be left untried. I will never give in, while I have strength to wield a pen or tell a tale. . . .

Fanny is quite ferocious and impassioned against the journey to Margate. Her motive is a kind one. She says, This cook is very silly, but very willing; you cannot imagine how many things I have to do. She adds, Mamma talks of going to Ramsgate in the autumn; why cannot I go then?

Mary, on the other hand, hated household duties and smarted under Mamma's taunts that if she had brains, she should put them to some good use in doing the household accounts. Figures then, as later, seemed possessed of some demon bent on eluding her, and it was to study languages that she wanted, or to listen to her father's conversation. The situation was not relieved by the interest shown in her by friends who came to the house; Mrs. Godwin knew that it was his daughter and not his wife whom they thought worthy of Godwin.

There are references to Mary in letters from Coleridge which serve for reminder, if any be needed, of the charm of that other poet who stands next to Shelley among those for the sake of whose personality as much as their achievement we would forgo meeting all others in the Elysian shades.

And you must love him, ere to you  
He will seem worthy of your love.<sup>1</sup>

In his letters to Godwin there is ample evidence of that candour and that generosity which betrayed him into lavishing on his contemporaries, in letters and in conversation, gifts which should have been more jealously husbanded and garnered for posterity.

When Godwin proposed to visit the Lakes, Coleridge wrote:

September 11th 1800.

. . . But here, too, you will meet with Wordsworth, 'the latch of whose shoe I am unworthy to unloose', and five miles from Wordsworth, Charles Lloyd has taken a house. Wordsworth is publishing a second volume of the 'Lyrical Ballads', which title is to be dropped and his 'Poems' substituted. . . . Kisses for Mary and Fanny. God love them!

I wish you would come and look out for a house for yourself here. You know, 'I wish' is privileged to have something silly to follow it.

But they would soon have quarrelled over Nature. Godwin suggests that he cannot help regarding 'uninterrupted rural retirement' as a principal cause of Coleridge's ill health, and is answered by a panegyric that betrays all too readily the zeal of the convert whose youth had been haunted by other passions than the 'sounding cataract'.

<sup>2</sup>Oh that you had now before your eyes the delicious picture of

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, 'A Poet's Epitaph'.

<sup>2</sup> June 23rd, 1801. Unpublished letter, Boscombe MSS. A. Later in the letter he refers to a recent visit from 'Mr. Sharpe and the poet Rogers'—'the latter tho' not a man of very vigorous intellect won a good deal both on myself and Wordsworth for what he said evidently came from his feelings and was the result of his own observation. I doubt not that they both returned to London with far other opinions respecting Wordsworth than the Scotch gentleman has been solicitous to impress his Listeners with.' See also Appendix C.

Lake and River and Bridge and Cottage and spacious Field with its pathway and woody hill . . . the same which I had from my sick bed even without raising my head from the pillow. . . . Even the Forms which struck terror into me in my fever dreams were still forms of Beauty.

He bears no malice that Godwin would not stand godfather to the new baby:

My love to your dear little ones. Mrs. Coleridge is well and Hartley and Derwent. The latter is as fair and fat a creature as ever had his naked body circumnavigated by an old nurse's kisses. I feel my knee beginning to make ready for the reception of the Lady Arthritis.

God bless you and S. T. Coleridge.

There can have been few more welcome visitors at Skinner Street. Legend has it that the children listened from behind a sofa to his reading of *The Ancient Mariner*; his influence on them is recorded by a visitor, the American Aaron Burr, afterwards Vice-President of the United States:

*Journal. February 15th, 1812.* Had only time to get to G[odwin]'s where dined. In the evening, William, the only son of W[illiam] Godwin, a lad of about 9 years old, gave his weekly lecture; having heard how Coleridge and others lectured, he would also lecture; and one of his sisters (Mary, I think) writes a lecture, which he reads from a little pulpit which they have erected for him. He went through it with great gravity and decorum. The subject was, 'The Influence of Governments on the Character of the People'. After the lecture we had tea, and the girls sang and danced an hour, and at nine came home.

For those who were not sceptical of Mr. Nicholson's prophecies, there may be another omen in a later entry of Burr's:

*March 14th, 1812.* To Godwin's. He was out. Madame and *les enfans* upstairs in the bedroom, where they received me, and I drank tea with his *enfans*. . . . Terribly afraid of *vigil* to-night, for Jane made my tea, and, I fear, too strong. It is only Fan that I can trust. . . .

## III

JUNE 1811—NOVEMBER 1813



As she grew up, Mary was not as strong as the other two girls, and, on account of the benefit she derived from visits to the sea, Mrs. Godwin arranged for her in June 1811 to board at Miss Petman's at Ramsgate. It was no doubt the increasing shortage of funds that prevented her from staying there longer, and she returned in December to Skinner Street. Here she found it more difficult than ever to get on with her step-mother, and her health was made the excuse to accept the offer of a Scottish friend, Mr. Baxter, to have her to live with his family in Dundee in exchange for occasional visits of his own daughters to London.

On June 7th, 1812, Godwin sent her off on the *Osnaburgh* and wrote a letter to Baxter the next day:

I daresay she will arrive more dead than alive, as she is extremely subject to sea-sickness, and the voyage will, not improbably, last nearly a week. Mr. Cline, the surgeon, however, decided that a sea voyage would probably be of more service to her than anything. . . .

There never can be a perfect equality between father and child, and if he has other objects and avocations to fill up the greater part of his time, the ordinary resource is for him to proclaim his wishes and commands in a way somewhat sententious and authoritative, and occasionally to utter his censures with seriousness and emphasis.

It can, therefore, seldom happen that he is the confidant of his child, or that the child does not feel some degree of awe or restraint in intercourse with him. I am not, therefore, a perfect judge of Mary's character. I believe she has nothing of what is commonly called vices, and that she has considerable talent. . . . I am anxious that she should be brought up (in this respect) like a philosopher, even like a cynic. It will add greatly to the strength and worth of her character. I should also observe that she has no love of dissipation, and will be perfectly satisfied with your woods and your mountains. I wish, too, that she should be *excited* to industry. She

has occasionally great perseverance, but occasionally, too, she shows great need to be roused. . . .

At Dundee Mary learned to love not only the woods and mountains where she might wander at will, alone with a book or in company with Isabel and Christy, but also the atmosphere of a quiet and contented home-circle such as she had not known before. If the talk of Mr. Baxter and David Booth, the Scottish schoolmaster who had first introduced him to Godwin, lacked something of the lustre which she knew at Skinner Street, it was compensated for by the happiness of the household in general. The influence of this is important, as it explains a good deal of her outlook afterwards and especially that 'conventionality' which her critics say she pursued in later years.

Of this period she was to write herself later:

'It is not singular that, as the daughter of two persons of distinguished literary celebrity, I should very early in life have thought of writing. As a child I scribbled; and my favourite pastime, during the hours given me for recreation, was to 'write stories'. Still I had a dearer pleasure than this, which was the formation of castles in the air—the indulging in waking dreams—the following up trains of thought, which had for their subject the formation of a succession of imaginary incidents. My dreams were at once more fantastic and agreeable than my writings. In the latter I was a close imitator—rather doing as others had done, than putting down the suggestions of my own mind. What I wrote was intended at least for one other eye—my childhood's companion and friend; but my dreams were all my own; I accounted for them to nobody; they were my refuge when annoyed—my dearest pleasure when free. . . .

. . . It was beneath the trees of the grounds belonging to our house, or on the bleak sides of the woodless mountains near, that my true compositions, the airy flights of my imagination, were born and fostered. I did not make myself the heroine of my tales. Life appeared to me too common-place an affair as regarded myself. I could not figure to myself that romantic woes or wonderful events would ever be my lot; but I was not confined to my own identity, and

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to *Frankenstein*, Standard Novels series, published by Messrs. Colburn & Bentley, 1831. See Appendix D.

I could people the hours with creations far more interesting to me at that age, than my own sensations.

Meanwhile, in London, the publishing business was not flourishing, and to keep it going Godwin was reduced from now onwards to lower and lower shifts for money. It is only fair to him, however, to remember that, unlike equally inveterate borrowers, he was as generous with his own money as with other people's. Marshall, for instance, often shared his resources, and Holcroft, too, when his plays and operas were not successful. A comparative stranger like Burr, whose *Journal* was quoted earlier, has an entry for March 25th, 1812:

Mr. and Mrs. Godwin would not give me their account, which must be 5 or 6 pounds; a very serious sum to them; they say that, when I succeed in the world, they will call on me for help.

A young man called Patrickson, who made Godwin's acquaintance at the same time as Shelley, had cause enough for gratitude. His parents were in trade and fairly prosperous, but not willing to make the sacrifice necessary to satisfy their son's ambition to go to college. Godwin sympathized with his enthusiasm and exerted himself to raise a public subscription on his behalf, to which such men as Basil Montagu and Raine, the Master of Charterhouse, contributed. Not content with this, he provided his petty cash as well:

July 30th, 1814.

I am so exceedingly pressed at this moment, that I must request you to be contented with £2, and must endeavour to send you a further supply on this day week. . . . I am sorry you still allow yourself to be so plagued by the people you dignify with the name of your enemies. They ought to be regarded no more than if you were 'hush'd with buzzing night-flies to your slumber'.

Patrickson appears to have been a somewhat spineless young man who was morbidly sensitive—'Many times a day I hear people passing my window say to one another, "Mr. Patrickson that came to college upon a subscription, lives there".' After writing a letter to Godwin in which he talks of

putting an end to his existence he was found shot in his rooms on August 10th, 1814.

The first mention of Shelley in Godwin's diary is the entry 'Write to Shelley', on January 6th, 1812.<sup>1</sup> This was in answer to the letter Shelley had written to him from Keswick, as he had written before to other well-known men whose acquaintance he had wanted to make.

<sup>1</sup>You will be surprised at hearing from a stranger. No introduction has, nor in all probability ever will, authorise that which common thinkers would call a liberty. It is, however, a liberty which, although not sanctioned by custom, is so far from being reprobated by reason, that the dearest interests of mankind imperiously demand that a certain etiquette of fashion should no longer keep 'man at a distance from man' and impose its flimsy barriers between the free communication of intellect. The name of Godwin has been accustomed to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration. . . . Considering then these feelings you will not be surprised at the inconceivable emotion with which I learned your existence and your dwelling. I had enrolled your name on the list of the honourable dead, I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so. You still live, and I firmly believe are still planning the welfare of human kind. . . .

If it was a symptom of Godwin's insatiable vanity that he could devote the time he did to correspondence with an admiring but unknown young man, whose intellectual powers he could not at this stage have recognized, it must be admitted that the advice he tendered him was sane and reasonable. He advised Shelley, for instance, against too early publishing, and tried to deter him from going to Ireland on the most quixotic of his crusades. Once he saw Shelley was determined, however, he let him have the introduction he wanted to his old friend Curran, the Reformer. He had stayed with him in 1800, and written of him:

Mr. Curran's kindness has been satisfactory, cordial, animated

<sup>1</sup> Ingpen, vol. i, p. 210. In the Bodleian MS. the letter is headed 'Keswick Jan. 3rd.' and begins as above without any formal opening.

and unceasing . . . he is wild, ferocious, jocular, humorous, mimetic and kittenish; a true Irishman, only in the vast portion of soul that informs him, which of course a very ordinary Irishman must be content to want. . . .

But when in 1814 Curran accepted the office of Master of the Rolls he became to Shelley a 'renegade' no better than Southey.

Shelley went to Ireland at the age of twenty-two with the idealism and irresponsibility of the undergraduate that he should have been if the authorities of University College had been wiser in their generation,<sup>1</sup> in order to undertake propaganda, as we should now call it, that would bring the Irish to a proper sense of their wrongs; that is, he was their sympathizer, who approved of Catholic Emancipation (but only as a means to the ultimate victory of 'reason over superstition') and desired the repeal of the Union (but put before these political issues, the need to attain to a real understanding of Virtue and Wisdom; 'when you have those things, you may defy the tyrant'). He published pamphlets:

<sup>2</sup>I send a man out every day to distribute copies, with instructions how and where to give them. . . . I stand at the balcony of our window, and watch till I see a man *who looks likely* . . . I throw a book to him.

But some of the 'rebels' discovered that there was more than literature to be obtained from the author of the *Address to the Irish People*, and the house was soon besieged by beggars, most of whom even the Shelley household<sup>3</sup> began to recognize as impostors. The nuisance of this, combined with the failure of the Association of Philanthropists who were to work for that Freedom of which the Irish were not showing themselves worthy ('the spirit of bigotry is high'), persuaded Shelley to

<sup>1</sup> Shelley was sent down from Oxford on account of his publication of *The Necessity of Atheism*. His friend, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, was also sent down for his protest at Shelley's treatment and his refusal to answer the same questions as to the authorship of the pamphlet which had been addressed to Shelley. See Dowden, vol. i, p. 119 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Miss Hitchener, February 27th, 1812. Ingpen, vol. i, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> Comprising Shelley, his wife Harriet, and her sister Eliza Westbrook.

return home. The warning of Godwin: 'You are preparing a scene of blood', was exaggerated, but Shelley appreciated that he might have done better to abide by the advice of its author than attempt so precipitately to put into practice the principles of *Political Justice*.

On their return to England, Shelley and Harriet invited Godwin to visit them at Lynmouth, but when he arrived there he found they had already left for Tanyralt in Wales. He wrote to his wife to tell her not to worry over the discomfort to which he had been put:

September 19th 1812.

. . . Since writing the above I have been to the house where Shelley lodged, and I bring good news. I saw the woman of the house, and I was delighted with her. She is a good creature, and quite loved the Shelleys. They lived here nine weeks and three days. . . . But the best news is that the woman says they will be in London in a fortnight. This quite comforts my heart.

And indeed Godwin seems to have borne no resentment, for when Shelley and Harriet came to London he welcomed them warmly at Skinner Street. On October 4th we find that they dine there, and during the six weeks that follow they call almost daily.

Godwin was no doubt genuinely delighted with his new disciple, and Mrs. Godwin was probably not unaware of the potential value to them of an heir to a baronetcy and considerable estate. She must have regretted that he did not offer a more favourable opportunity for the disposing of Jane, but he had already a very beautiful young wife who always accompanied him, dressed in the height of fashion. Sometimes they also brought with them a Miss Hitchener, a woman somewhat angular both in mind and body, who had been a schoolmistress in Sussex, but now appeared to be supported by Shelley. They called her Portia and showed great respect for her intellectual powers. On other occasions Harriet's sister, Eliza Westbrook, came with them, a tall dark woman, of commanding personality, to whom the younger sister deferred like a daughter.

Mrs. Godwin was too accustomed to the conversations of her husband's friends to be surprised at the range of them ('matter and spirit, atheism, utility and truth, Church government or the characteristics of German thought and literature'); and if she smiled to herself when Harriet broke her usually admiring silence to liken Godwin to Plato, she was very pleasant to the young couple. She only wished they were less unstable, for not only had there been the disappointment over Lynmouth, but now again when they had invited the Godwins to dine with them on Friday, November 17th, they suddenly disappeared from London without any apologies or farewell.

In the summer of the next year, however, they were back again; this time spending more time with the Newtons than at Skinner Street, for Shelley had been much attracted by Mr. Newton<sup>1</sup> when he met him with the Godwins at a firework party on the previous Guy Fawkes Day, and was now putting into practice Mr. Newton's vegetarian doctrines. If the visits to Skinner Street were less frequent and had lost something of their early rapture, if Miss Hitchener, now called the Brown Demon, no longer came, and Harriet was an expectant mother, yet the new disciple had grown into a friend to whom Godwin could confide his troubles. There is an entry in Godwin's diary for November 12th which speaks volumes: 'Shelley; deeds.'

#### IV

MAY 1814

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WHEN Mary returned to Skinner Street from Dundee in May 1814 she was a girl of seventeen with an independence of mind and a decision of character that might not have been guessed from her looks, for her large hazel eyes and open brow com-

¹ Author of a plea for vegetarianism, *The Return to Nature*, 1810. In the British Museum MSS. there are letters to him from Canning, with whom he was intimate.

bined with her extreme fairness to give her an appearance of serenity, a 'Madonna look', that hid the extreme emotional sensitiveness underneath. She took her beauty, as she took her manners, from her surroundings: in congenial company she lighted up and became animated; alone or unsure of her reception, she was quiet and given to melancholy.

It was unlikely that she would find it any easier to get on with her step-mother than she had as a child, for Mrs. Godwin's temper had not grown more even under the strain of continuing domestic difficulties and increasing business embarrassments. The claims of the family were not growing less; Charles's position with Constable's in Edinburgh was precarious; William at eleven years old was attending Dr. Burney's school, but was none too amenable when he was at home; Fanny, although she bore the first brunt of economy in her own needs and in the housekeeping, and always made excuses for her, suffered from Mrs. Godwin's neglect of her husband's early advice to 'manage and economise your temper', and was made to feel that she was an outsider who ought to be earning her own living; Jane Clairmont,¹ like Mary a young woman now and no longer a schoolgirl, lived at home, sometimes gay, sometimes cynical, sometimes 'romantic', but never helpful. So dark that the pupils of her eyes were not distinguishable from the iris, with thick black hair and an olive complexion, she was certainly interesting-looking, and to make the most of it she decided to drop the homely name of Jane and to call herself Claire.² She also decided it would be the height of 'romance' to go on the stage, but beyond providing an excuse for neglecting her share of housework, the introductions she sought to

¹ Dowden, vol. i, p. 440. 'Writing late in life of the events of July, 1814, Miss Clairmont declared, "I was just turned sixteen, and was only two months before come home from a boarding-school kept by a French lady." Her darkness may be accounted for by a Bristol entry in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1733 discovered by Mrs. Scarlett: "August, married Mr. Clairmont a Portugal Merchant to Miss Leglese, daughter of a noted Wine Merchant."'

² She is variously called Clary, Clare, Clara, and Claire; I have adopted uniformly the last as the most generally used.

managers and the hours she spasmodically devoted to singing practice were as unfruitful as her passion for the poetry of Lord Byron.

But, if she shared the discomforts of the household, Mary did not at this time have the humiliation of realizing that the friends of her father's in whose company she delighted were fast coming to be valued by him less for their intellectual than for their financial standing. If she knew that the young man,¹ about whose Irish adventures she had heard so much, and whom she had met two years ago when he brought his wife, in an expensive purple satin frock, to dinner, was lending money to her father, she did not know that he had to raise it by ruinous post-obits, nor that he was never likely to be repaid. She accepted the help he was giving as evidence of his own generosity and a just appreciation of Godwin's genius, and only wanted the business to be settled so that they might talk about other things that were more interesting: about liberty and revolution; about the poem, *Queen Mab*, which Shelley had just published; and, above all, about Mary Wollstonecraft, for he was eager for every word about her that Godwin could relate. They would talk also of Kant's *Critiques* and of the classics, and Mary listening to them would resolve to learn Latin and Greek and to study philosophy so that one day she would be able to join in their discussions.

But it was not easy, for Mamma did not see why Mary, and not her own daughter, should play the part of Mary in the Gospel, and stay with Godwin in the library, where Opie's portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft hung over the fire-place, when there was dinner to be cleared and William to be put to bed. Also Mamma hated to see her with a book, and the only time when she was not about, in the morning because she breakfasted late, it seemed churlish and selfish not to help Fanny.

¹ On March 14th, 1812, Godwin had written to Shelley: 'You cannot imagine how much all the females of my family, Mrs. Godwin and three daughters, are interested in your letters and your history.' Fanny corresponded with Shelley later in the year.

For Fanny also was her mother's daughter and they should have had much in common, in spite of the four years' difference in age; but Fanny was both too busy and too shy for confidence, and all too often Mary found herself unwillingly led away by Claire's enthusiasm to talk to her instead. To escape from Mamma and to save entangling herself with Claire, Mary had to get away from Skinner Street, and she began a daily walk which became a pilgrimage to her mother's grave in St. Pancras' Churchyard.

Here she could turn over in her mind the subjects her father and his visitors discussed; she could build castles in the air, and she could read her books uninterrupted. This was most important, for if she was to write she must educate herself and train her mind, and then perhaps her books would one day be famous like her mother's, and she would be worthy of the friendship of great men, philosophers like her father, poets like Percy Bysshe Shelley.

V

SUMMER 1814



If Shelley was in Mary's thoughts at her mother's grave-side, he himself could not keep away from Skinner Street. When he met his old friend Hogg, who had been sent down from Oxford with him, he took him along too. Hogg has left an inimitable account of his visit.

¹ . . . In Cheapside I fell in with Shelley: I spoke to him of the trial that was depending. He rarely took an interest in such matters, and he expressed no curiosity as to the result. We walked westward, through Newgate Street. When we reached Skinner Street, he said, 'I must speak with Godwin; come in, I will not detain you long.'

I followed him through the shop, which was the only entrance, and up-stairs. We entered a room on the first floor; it was shaped like a quadrant. In the arc were windows; in one radius a fire-place,

¹ Hogg's *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii, p. 537, Moxon, 1858.

and in the other a door, and shelves with many old books. William Godwin was not at home. Bysshe strode about the room, causing the crazy floor of the ill-built, unowned dwelling-house to shake and tremble under his impatient footsteps. He appeared to be displeased at not finding the fountain of Political Justice. 'Where is Godwin?' he asked me several times, as if I knew. I did not know, and, to say the truth, I did not care. He continued his uneasy promenade; and I stood reading the names of old English authors on the backs of the venerable volumes, when the door was partially and softly opened. A thrilling voice called 'Shelley!' A thrilling voice answered, 'Mary!' And he darted out of the room, like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king. A very young female, fair and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look, wearing a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time, had called him out of the room. He was absent a very short time—a minute or two; and then returned. 'Godwin is out; there is no use in waiting.' So we continued our walk along Holborn.

'Who was that pray?' I asked; 'a daughter?'

'Yes.'

'A daughter of William Godwin?'

'The daughter of Godwin and Mary.'

Soon Shelley found out Mary's retreat and began to meet her there. They talked of Mary Wollstonecraft and of how Shelley had suffered from following in his own life what she and Godwin taught. He told her of his persecution at Sion House and at Eton, his expulsion from Oxford, his disappointment in Ireland, and his growing disillusion with friends he had trusted.

It was not long before he confided to her his more intimate troubles: Harriet's coldness to him, her refusal to nurse their baby, Ianthe, and her neglect of everything else for the tastes of a 'fine lady'.¹ Her sister Eliza, whom he loathed, had lived with them, and, although she was now gone, her influence remained, so that the more demands Harriet made upon her husband the less sympathy and understanding was she ready

¹ Cp. Shelley's letter to Fanny, Dec. 10th, 1812: 'How is Harriet a fine lady? You indirectly accuse her in your letter of this offence—to me the most unpardonable of all.' Ingpen, i. 370.

to give him. She did not love him. He had never loved her, but had married her from a sense of duty when, as a schoolgirl, she had thrown herself on his protection. He had thought he could make something fine of her character and he had tried to educate her mind to share his interests. He had grown fond of her and he had been tolerant when she made Ianthe an excuse to give up her books, but now she had failed him in sympathy too. She denied herself to him, and he felt that in remaining tied to her he was acting a lie.¹

'You must know', he said to Peacock, 'everyone who knows me must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy. Harriet is a noble animal, but she can do neither.' Peacock says of him at this time: ²'He showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of "a mind, suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection".'

By July of that year neither Mary nor Shelley could any longer ignore the nature of their feeling for each other; on the copy of *Queen Mab* which he gave to her Shelley scribbled on the inner fly-leaf, in pencil: 'You see, Mary, I have not forgotten you.' And underneath the dedication to Harriet he carefully copied: ³'Count Slobendorf was about to marry a woman, who, attracted solely by his fortune proved her selfishness by deserting him in prison.'

At the end of the book Mary wrote:

July 1814—

This book is sacred to me, and as no other shall ever look into it, I may write what I please. Yet what shall I write? That I love the

¹ 'Chatter about Harriet' is relegated to Appendix A. The facts presented here are such as Shelley at the time believed them to be.

² Peacock's *Memoirs of Shelley*, Oxford edition, p. 48.

³ Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 55: 'Possibly this may refer to Count Schlabrendorf, an expatriated Prussian subject, who was imprisoned in Paris during the Reign of Terror, and escaped, but subsequently returned, and lived there in retirement, almost in concealment. He was a cynic, an eccentric, yet a patriot withal. He was divorced from his wife, and Shelley had probably got hold of a wrong version of his story.'

author beyond all powers of expression and that I am parted from him. Dearest and only love, by that love we have promised to each other, although I may not be yours, I can never be another's. But I am thine, exclusively thine.

^aBy the kiss of love, the glance none saw beside,
The smile none else might understand,
The whispered thought of heart allied,
The pressure of the thrilling hand,

I have pledged myself to thee, and sacred is the gift. I remember your words, 'You are now, Mary, going to mix with many, and for a moment I shall depart, but in the solitude of your chamber I shall be with you.' Yes, you are ever with me, sacred vision.

^bBut ah! I feel in this was given
A blessing never meant for me,
Thou art too like a dream from heaven
For earthly love to merit thee.

VI

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1814



^aIt is clear from entries in his diary that by July 8th Godwin had become aware of the growing attachment between Shelley and his daughter. He thought it his duty to remonstrate with them, but he was in a difficult position; less because of the conflict between his anti-matrimonial principles and the application of them—for he had long since come to terms with his philosophical conscience—than because he wanted to show his disapproval while taking care not to break off relations with his best source of income.

But protests from Godwin, consistent or inconsistent with *Political Justice*, meant nothing to Shelley as soon as he became convinced that he was no longer morally bound to Harriet; and this decision he reached after sending for her to London from Bath on July 14th and putting the whole position before her.

^a Byron, 'To Thyrza', stanza 8, adapted.

^b Byron, 'If sometimes in the haunts of men', last four lines, adapted.

She no longer loved him, therefore she would have no objection to Mary Godwin's taking her place as his wife while she remained the friend, the sister, of both of them, welcome in their home, or, with £200 a year allowed her, free to return to the Westbrooks or to live independently as she had been doing for most of the past year. To Shelley this seemed a logical and fair offer to a woman who had always professed to share his views on marriage.

As for Harriet, the shock of realization that her coquetry of the previous months had not attracted but repulsed her husband, and that he was as serious in his intention to separate as he was sincere in his naïve offer of protection, reduced her to a silence of incredulity that he readily interpreted for consent. Considering himself free, he now asked Mary to link her fate with his. She consented, but fearing that as she was still under seventeen Godwin might take legal steps to restrain her they decided on flight abroad. At five o'clock in the morning on July 28th Mary, accompanied by Claire Clairmont, left her home to meet Shelley at the corner of Hatton Garden where he was waiting with a post-chaise.¹

The day was unbearably hot and Mary had to rest at each stage. They were afraid that this delay might mean that they would be overtaken, so at Dartford they took four horses and succeeded in getting to Dover at 4 o'clock. Mary was refreshed by a bathe in the sea there, but, still nervous of pursuit, they decided not to wait for the next day's packet but to take a small sailing-boat manned by two fishermen.

²The evening was most beautiful; . . . there was but little wind,

¹ To expect an answer to the question, Why did they take Claire? is to impound logic; that she spoke French, that she would be a help to Mary, that she was the victim of Mrs. Godwin's oppression, are all inadequate reasons. The best gloss on the circumstances is provided by Monsieur A. Koszul, with a Gallic concentration that is untranslatable: 'Au reste, il serait bien vain de chercher des explications de détail et de raison, là où tout fut élan, entraînement joyeux, vertige de fantaisie passionnée plus encore que de passion. Il faut savoir ici ne point se scandaliser, ne point s'étonner même, si l'on veut comprendre.' *La Jeunesse de Shelley*, p. 216.

² The quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from the Journal kept jointly

and the sails flapped in the flagging breeze; the moon rose, and night came on, and with the night a slow, heavy swell and a fresh breeze, which soon produced a sea so violent as to toss the boat very much. I was dreadfully sea-sick, and, as is usually my custom when thus affected, I slept during the greater part of the night, awaking only from time to time to ask where we were, and to receive the dismal answer each time, 'Not quite halfway.'

The wind was violent and contrary; if we could not reach Calais the sailors proposed making for Boulogne. They promised only two hours' sail from shore, yet hour after hour passed, and we were still far distant, when the moon sunk in the red and stormy horizon and the fast-flashing lightning became pale in the breaking day.

We were proceeding slowly against the wind, when suddenly a thunder squall struck the sail, and the waves rushed into the boat; even the sailors acknowledged that our situation was perilous; but they succeeded in reefing the sail; the wind was now changed, and we drove before the gale directly to Calais.

Journal (Shelley). Mary did not know our danger; she was resting between my knees, that were unable to support her; she did not speak or look but I felt she was there. I had time in that moment to reflect, and even to reason upon death; it was rather a thing of discomfort and disappointment than horror to me. We should never be separated, but in death we might not know and feel our union as now. I hope, but my hopes are not unmixed with fear for what may befall this inestimable spirit when we appear to die.

The morning broke, the lightning died away, the violence of the wind abated. We arrived at Calais, whilst Mary still slept; we drove upon the sands. Suddenly the broad sun rose over France.

They had been none too speedy if they wanted to avoid pursuit in England, for that evening (July 29th) 'Captain Davidson came and told us that a fat lady had arrived who said Shelley had run away with her daughter; it was Mrs. Godwin'. Claire spent that night with her mother, but the next day, still undecided between her mother's entreaties and the delights of freedom, she took Shelley's advice to think it over for an hour

by Mary and Shelley. The story is also to be found in all editions of the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* in Shelley's Prose Works. The *History* was first published in 1817.

or more, and at the end of it, the Journal states, 'she returned to Mrs. Godwin and informed her that she resolved to continue with us. Mrs. Godwin departed without answering a word.'

The same day they left for Paris, where they sought out Miss Helen Maria Williams, friend of Godwin and of Mary Wollstonecraft, who had been imprisoned by Robespierre for her advocacy of the Girondists. She was not at home, but 'all the world loves a lover' and the Shelleys were never inaccessible; they met instead Monsieur de Savi.¹

He offered us his services in the necessary enquiries. He took us out of our way for the pleasure of hearing himself talk; he told us that he has assisted in bribing the mob to overthrow the statue of Napoleon, that he was a royalist, and had been in the English army during the reign of Bonaparte; he was the first royalist who had entered Paris. He made us sit down in the garden of the Tuileries, and there, with a smile of abundant and overflowing vanity, confessed that he was an author and a poet. We invited him to breakfast, hoping to derive from his officiousness a relief from our embarrassments.

When they were not sightseeing and trying to raise money from Tavernier,² they looked through the papers that Mary had brought with her: her own attempts at a novel, *Hate*,³ letters of Shelley's and of Godwin's, and books of her mother's. One night they are 'too happy to sleep', and, on another, 'almost forget that we are prisoners in Paris; Mary especially seems insensible to all future evil. She rested on my bosom, and seemed even indifferent to take sufficient food for the sustenance of life.'

The Journal⁴ begun on July 28th was kept jointly by Mary and Shelley; it gives more fully than the published *History of*

¹ Rouve de Savi; mentioned in *Almanach des Muses*, 1810. Koszul, *La Jeunesse de Shelley*, p. 217.

² An agent of Hookham's from whom they were expecting supplies.

³ No more is known of this work.

⁴ See Preface, v, and Appendix B. I have not given references to Journal extracts which are to be found in Dowden and Mrs. Marshall, except where they differ from the original.

a Six Weeks' Tour the details that make up the picture of this singular but idyllic honeymoon: the two girls starting off in their black silk dresses to ride through the dusty roads of France to Switzerland and Germany on a donkey which Shelley bought from the Paris ass market, but which was so weak that it had to be carried and at Charenton changed for a mule; Shelley riding into Troyes while Mary and Claire walked behind because he had sprained his ankle the day before; and, settled at the inn, Mary and Claire indefatigably keeping their diaries and Shelley sitting down to write his famously tactless letter to Harriet.

Troyes, 120 miles from Paris on the way to Switzerland, August 13, 1814.

¹My dearest Harriet,

I write to you from this detestable town; I write to show that I do not forget you; I write to urge you to come to Switzerland, where you will at last find one firm and constant friend, to whom your interests will be always dear—by whom your feelings will never wilfully be injured. From none can you expect this but me—all else are either unfeeling ^aor selfish, or have beloved friends of their own, as Mrs. Boinville, to whom their attention and affection is confined.

I will write at length from Neufchatel, or ^byou direct your letters 'd'être laissé à la Bureau de Poste Neufchatel'—until you hear again. We have journeyed from Paris on foot, with a mule to carry our baggage; and Mary, who has not been sufficiently well to ^cwalk, fears the fatigue of walking. We passed through a fertile country, neither interesting from the character of its inhabitants nor the beauty of the scenery. We came 120 miles in four days; the last two days we passed over the country that was the seat of war. I cannot describe to you the frightful desolation of this scene; village after village entirely ruined and burned, the white ruins towering in innumerable forms of destruction among the beautiful trees. The inhabitants were famished; families once ^dindependent now beg their bread in this wretched country; no provisions; no accommodation; filth, misery, and famine everywhere. (You will see

¹ Ingpen, vol. i, p. 425. *Corrections in Julian edition*: (a) 'and'. (b) 'or Uri'. (c) 'to bear the fatigue of walking'. (d) add 'perfectly'.

nothing of this on^e your route to Geneva.) I must remark to you that, dreadful as these calamities are, I can scarcely pity the inhabitants; they are the most unamiable, inhospitable, and unaccommodating of the human race.

We go by some carriage from this town to Neufchatel, because I have strained my leg and am unable to walk. I hope to be recovered by that time; but on our last day's journey I was perfectly unable to walk. ^fMary resigned the mule to me. Our walk has been, excepting this, sufficiently agreeable; we have met none of the robbers they prophesied at Paris. You shall hear our adventures more detailed if I do not hear at Neufchatel that I am soon to have the pleasure of communicating to you in person, and of welcoming you to some sweet retreat I will procure for you among the mountains.

I have written to Peacock to superintend money affairs; he is expensive, inconsiderate, and cold, but surely not utterly perfidious and unfriendly and unmindful of our kindness to him; besides, interest will secure his attention to these things.

I wish you to bring with you the two deeds which Tahourdin has to prepare for you, as also a copy of the settlement.

Do not part with any of your money. But what shall be done about the books? You can consult on the spot. With love to my sweet little Ianthe, ever most affectionately yours,

S.

I write in great haste; we depart directly.

The last vulgarity of 'touring battlefields' was not then dreamt of, and the distress of devastated areas was something more than a phrase to thirsty travellers who asked at a village for milk and were told there was none—'the Cossacks had taken away all the cows'. But Shelley's hatred of tyranny and violence did not need strengthening by actual contact with their devastations, and more important for its ultimate influence on him was the first impression of mountain grandeur in Switzerland; *Alastor* and *Prometheus Unbound* have abundant examples of Swiss scenery 'recollected in tranquillity'.

At the time he was not writing poetry, but planning a novel, *The Assassins*.¹ The fragment that was all he completed of

¹ To be found in Shelley's Prose Works.

(^e) 'in'. (^f) Substitute 'and' for full stop.

this is interesting not only on account of the Swiss valley described under Bethzatanai, an advance on the imaginary landscapes of *Queen Mab* as it is the precursor of better things in the poems to come, but also as evidence of psychological development. The community who escape from the siege of Jerusalem to found their ideal republic in this Happy Valley 'contained among them neither philosophers nor poets'; they 'no longer owe their very existence to the vices, the fears and the follies of mankind. Love, friendship, and philanthropy would now be the characteristic disposers of their industry', but the ideal of happiness is recognized to exist in the less abstracted spheres of simple pleasures and gay companionship. It is significant that the first consequence of his union with Mary should be an awakening both to a new sense of natural beauty and to a deeper understanding of humanity.

But they were too young and too happy to be introspective or self-conscious travellers, and the Journal is a record of trivialities and poetic reflections freely interspersed.

Monday, August 22nd. Leave Soleure at half-past five; very cold indeed, but we now again see the magnificent mountains of Le Valais. Mary is not well, and all are tired of wheeled machines. Shelley is in a jocosely horrible mood. We dine at Zoffingen, and sleep there two hours. In our drive after dinner we see the mountains of St. Gothard, &c. Change our plans of going over St. Gothard. Arrive tired to death; find at the room of the inn a horrible spinet and a case of stuffed birds. Sup at table d'hôte.

Tuesday, August 23rd. We leave at four o'clock and arrive at Lucerne about ten. After breakfast we hire a boat to take us down the lake. Shelley and Mary go out to buy several needful things, and then we embark. It is a most divine day; the farther we advance the more magnificent are the shores of the lake—rock and pine forests covering the feet of the immense mountains. We read part of L'abbé Barruel's *Histoire du Jacobinisme*. We land at Bessen, go to the wrong inn, where a most comical scene ensues. We sleep at Brunnen. Before we sleep however we look out of the window.

Wednesday, August 24th. We consult on our situation. We
* cannot procure a house; we are in despair; the filth of the apartment

is terrible to Mary; she cannot bear it all the winter. We propose to proceed to Fluelen, but the wind comes from Italy, and will not permit. At last we find a lodging in an ugly house they call the Chateau for one louis a month, which we take; it consists of two rooms. Mary and Shelley walk to the shore of the lake and read the description of the Siege of Jerusalem in Tacitus. We come home, look out of the window and go to bed.

The next day, August 25th, they rent a château for six months, but suddenly discover that they have very little money left and must needs return to England as quickly—and as cheaply—as possible. Up the Rhine and the Reuss to Holland shall be their route.

Saturday, August 27th. We depart at seven; it rains violently till just the end of our voyage. We conjecture the astonishment of the good people at Brunnen. We arrive at Lucerne, dine, then write a part of the romance, and read Shakespeare. Interrupted by

Saturday, September 10th. We remain at Marluys, Mary begins 'Hate', and gives Shelley the greater pleasure. Shelley writes part of his romance. Sleep at Marluys. Wind contrary.

Sunday, September 11th. The wind becomes more favourable. We hear that we are to sail. Mary writes more of her 'Hate'. We depart, cross the bar; the sea is horribly tempestuous, and Mary is nearly sick, nor is Shelley much better. There is an easterly gale in the night which almost kills us, whilst it carries us nearer our journey's end.

Monday, September 12th. It is calm; we remain on deck nearly the whole day. Mary recovers from her sickness. We dispute with one man upon the slave trade.

PART 2
MARRIAGE : ENGLAND

1814-1818



*Then, that sweet bondage which is Freedom's self,
And rivets with sensation's softest tie
The kindred sympathies of human souls,
Needed no fetters of tyrannic law.*

SHELLEY

'Queen Mab,' ix. 76-9.



THE memory of what Shelley was to call, three years later, 'one of those ephemeral summers of joy and beauty of which our visible world sometimes dreams' was needed to sustain them in the years that followed. Immediately on their arrival home sordid cares ran out to greet them like shadows of trouble before; Shelley had no money left to pay the captain and only with difficulty persuaded him to let the three of them disembark so that they could take a cab and go to Harriet's lodgings. Here Mary and Claire had to wait for two hours outside while he pleaded with her for a loan which she grudged, although it was on account of the advantage she had taken of his permission to draw on his account for her needs that he now had nothing in the bank to meet his own claims.

The money obtained, they set off to pay their debts, to buy some clothes for Shelley, and arrange for a night's lodging at the Stratford Hotel. The next day—

Journal, Wednesday, September 14th. Talk and read the newspaper. Shelley calls on Harriet who is certainly a very odd creature;¹ he writes several letters; calls on Hookham and brings home Wordsworth's *Excursion*, of which we read a part, much disappointed. He is a slave. Shelley engages lodgings to which we remove in the evening.

¹ The Westbrooks may justifiably have thought Shelley 'a very odd creature' also; at the beginning of October he could write to Harriet saying, 'I am united to another; you are no longer my wife. Perhaps I have done you injury, but surely most innocently and unintentionally, in having commenced any connexion with you'; and put a PS.: 'I hope you will attend to the preservation of your health. I do not apprehend the slightest danger from your approaching labour, I think you may safely repose confidence in Sims' skill. Your last labour was painful, but auspicious. I understand that cases of difficulty after that are very rare', and a PPS.: 'I am in want of stockings, hanks and Mrs. W's posthumous works.' From *Shelley's Lost Letters to Harriet*, edited by Leslie Hotson, Faber & Faber, 1930.

For about a month they were not disturbed seriously over money or the boycott of Skinner Street, and the Journal gives a happy record of reading, study ('Mary learns Greek'), and excursions with Peacock to sail paper boats at Hampstead or Primrose Hill. Claire's nightmares are the only disturbance; the supernatural wonders which she and Shelley sat up discussing late into the night after Mary had gone to bed naturally upset a mind so easily unbalanced as hers; Shelley would try to soothe her. 'I read part of Alexy;¹ I repeated one of my own poems. Our conversation, though intentionally directed to other topics, irresistibly recurred to these.' The end was always the same: 'She shrieked and writhed on the floor. I ran to Mary; I communicated in a few words the state of Jane. I brought her to Mary. The convulsion gradually ceased, and she slept. At daybreak we examined her apartment and found her pillow on the chair.'

Later, her horrors were not taken so seriously.

October 14th. Night comes; Jane walks in her sleep, and groans horribly; listen for two hours; at length bring her to Mary. Begin Julius, and finish the little volume of Cicero. . . .

The next morning the chimney board in Jane's room is found to have walked leisurely into the middle of the room, accompanied by the pillow, who, being very sleepy, tried to get into bed again, but sat down on his back.

By the middle of October there was reason to fear that Harriet's creditors would commit Shelley to prison for debt, and it was necessary to move again from rooms back to the Stratford Hotel. Here Charles Clairmont, who had lost his post with Constable's, visited them in spite of Godwin's interdiction; Fanny, less bold, was called 'a slave' by Mary with youthful intolerance, but when something really serious occurred she risked his displeasure for her sister's sake.

Saturday, October 22nd. Finish the Life of Alfieri. Go to the tomb [Mary Wollstonecraft's] and read the Essay on Sepulchres

¹ *The Memoirs of Alexy Haimatoff*, by Hogg, 1813.

there. Shelley is out all the morning at the lawyers, but nothing is done. . . .

In the evening a letter from Fanny, warning us of the Hookhams. Jane and Shelley go after her; they find her, but Fanny runs away.

The anxiety of the time was aggravated for Mary by her state of health, for she was expecting her first child, and not soothed by knowledge of the unworthy part played by her father and by friends. Only Peacock stood by them; her own great friend Isabel Baxter, now engaged to David Booth, wrote to her and showed that not only did she disapprove of what she had done, but also believed the story that she and Claire had been sold to Shelley by Godwin for £800 and £700 apiece!

Shelley often did not dare to return home at night, and had to meet Mary surreptitiously. 'A first parting is a kind of landmark in life—a starting-post whence we begin our career out of illusion and the land of dreams into reality and endurance,' wrote Mary years afterwards in *Lodore*, a novel where much of the story of Villiers and Ethel is autobiographical and, in the account of Villiers's escape from his creditors, an exact description of this time.

¹During the week the young pair walked together in the parks at such morning hours as would prevent their meeting any acquaintance. . . . Villiers also traced his daily, weary, disappointing way to his solicitor where he found things looking more blank and dismal each day. Then, when evening came and the curtains were drawn they might have been at the top of Mount Caucasus instead of in the centre of London, so complete were they cut off from everything except each other. . . . On Sundays they could be together, 'when the clock strikes twelve on Saturday night, the magic spells and potent charms of Saunders' friends [the bailiffs] cease to have power; at that hour I shall be restored to you. . . . Adieu till this evening and then, as Belvidera says "*Remember twelve*".'^a Then they had to separate again and often Ethel arrived nearly senseless at Duke Street [her lodgings] and once or twice fainted on entering the warm room.

In the Journal Mary notes on several days that she has to

¹ *Lodore*, chapter xxxv, *passim*. ^a Otway, *Venice Preserved*, III. ii. 211.

take a coach, she is so tired with walking about the streets, and she goes to bed early, 'nearly dead'. Sometimes she is in danger of not getting enough to eat.

Tuesday, November 1st. Learn Greek all morning. Shelley goes to the 'Change. Jane calls. People want their money; won't send up dinner, and we are all very hungry. Jane goes to Hookham. Shelley and I talk about her character. Jane returns without money. Writes to Fanny about coming to see her; she can't come. Writes to Charles. Goes to Peacock to send him to us with some eatables; he is out. Charles promises to see her. She returns to Pancras; he goes there, and tells the dismal state of the Skinner Street affairs. Shelley goes to Peacock's; comes home with cakes. Wait till T. Hookham sends money to pay the bill. Shelley returns to Pancras. Have tea, and go to bed. Shelley goes to Peacock's to sleep.

Notes that were their first love-letters passed frequently between Mary and Shelley during this miserable time.

(Shelley to Mary.)

¹When will you meet me tomorrow? At *one* I must be on Change. I think it best that you should obtain from Hookham all the information you can get, & then write to me & appoint a meeting at some hour which you think best.

Adieu my beloved. [Deletion of 3 words] a thousand of the sweetest kisses live in memory. Adieu. I go to sleep.

[Postscript] If you are inclined to work over any Latin, read Cicero's *Paradoxa*, one particularly concerning *Regulus*.

Adieu my own beloved my Mary
goodnight.

Thursday night, Nov. 3.

(Mary to Shelley).

²Dearest Love, I am so out of spirits; I feel so lonely; but we shall meet to-morrow; so I will try to be happy. Gray's Inn Gardens is, I fear, a dangerous place; yet can you think of any other? I received your letter to-night. I wanted one, for I had not received one for nearly two days; but do not think I mean anything by this,

¹ Unpublished, from *Shelley Correspondence in the Bodleian Library*.

² Dowden, vol. i, pp. 501-2. Not in Mrs. Marshall.

my love. I know you took a long, long walk yesterday, and so you could not write; but I, who am at home, who do not walk out, I could write to you all day, love. . . .

. . . Oh! how I long to be at our dear home, where nothing can trouble us, neither friends nor enemies! Don't be angry at this, love, for you know they are all a bad set; but Nantgwillt—do you not wish to be settled there, in a house you know, love, with your own Mary—nothing to disturb you, studying, walking? Oh! it is much better, believe me, not to be able to see the light of the sun for mountains than for houses. . . .

By November 9th the danger of arrest was over, and the Journal for that day runs:

Wednesday, November 9th. Pack up all morning; leave Pancras about 3; call at Peacocks for Shelley; Charles Clairmont has been for £8. Go to Nelson Square. Jane gloomy; she is very sullen with Shelley. Well, never mind, my love—we are happy.

II

OCTOBER 1814—MAY 1815



'Two's company—three's none', but Claire was not anxious to exchange the open-handed hospitality of Shelley's home for the uneasy shifts of Skinner Street or the constraint of a situation as companion or governess. Easier and pleasanter than removing herself was it to admit her faults to her Journal—or to Shelley, making confession an excuse for hours of indulgence in intimate self-analysis.

¹(*Claire's Journal for October 14th.*) Get up late: go down in a very ill humour: quarrel with Shelley. But to know one's faults is to mend them; perhaps this morning, though productive of very painful feelings, has in reality been of more essential benefit to me than any I ever yet passed. How hateful it is to quarrel—to say a thousand unkind things meaning none, things produced by the

¹ Dowden, vol. i, pp. 484, 479.

bitterness of disappointment! Walk home through the Regent's Park. Leave them, and go home by myself. Peacock calls; laughs at us. Good news of Eliza.^a Shelley comes into my room and thinks he was to blame, but I don't. How I like good, kind, explaining people! S[helley] and P[eacock] go to the pond. Walk out a little by myself. Peacock goes after tea. Read St. Leon.^b Go to bed at nine; about half after ten Shelley comes up, and I go down and sleep with Mary because I groan. Go to sleep at half-past two.

October 19th. Mary says things which I construe into unkindness. I was wrong. We soon become friends, but I felt deeply the imaginary cruelties I conjured up.

Even Shelley's passion for forming the pliant feminine mind, undaunted by early failures with his sisters and with Harriet, faltered a little before Claire's vagaries.

November 14th. (Shelley) . . . I wish this girl had a resolute mind. Without firmness, understanding is impotent and the truest principles unintelligible.

Monday, December 19th. (Shelley) . . . Charles Clairmont comes in the evening; a discussion concerning female character. Clara imagines that I treat her unkindly; Mary consoles her with her all-powerful benevolence. I rise (having already gone to bed) and speak with Clara; she is very unhappy; I leave her tranquil.

The strength of Mary's character throughout her life lay not in any natural placidity (here the student of Lavater was correct) but in the conquest of herself that enabled her to attain calm. The picture of her here, the comforter, calm and strong to quieten a hysterical girl or to soothe Shelley himself, is typical of her; only transient is the bitterness of the entry in the *Journal* which announces the birth of Harriet's son.¹

Tuesday, December 6th. Very unwell. Shelley and Clara walk out, as usual, to heaps of places. Read Agathon, which I do not like so well as Peregrine. . . . A letter from Hookham, to say that Harriet has been brought to bed by a son and heir. Shelley writes a number

¹ Charles Bysshe. See p. 81, note 2.

^a Shelley's eldest sister. The *Journal* shows that he had a scheme for 'kidnapping' Eliza and his sister Hellen, and taking them to Ireland. 'Peacock likes our plan,' records Claire in her *Journal*. See Dowden, note, vol. i, p. 478.

^b The novel by Godwin.

of circular letters of this event, which ought to be ushered in with ringing of bells, &c., for it is the son *of his wife*. . . .

The New Year (1815) brought better prospects for Shelley's financial position, as his grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, died on January 6th at the age of eighty-six. With Claire he went down to Sussex to hear the will:

Friday, January 13th. (Mary) . . . His father would not allow him to enter Field Place; he sits before the door and reads Comus. Dr. Blocksome [sic] comes out; tells him that his father is very angry with him. Sees my name in Milton. . . . Hogg dines, and spends the evening with us.

On February 8th they moved to Hans Place, and here on February 22nd Mary's baby, a little girl, was born prematurely. A week later they moved again, but the promise of the baby's increased strength was not maintained, and on March 2nd Mary awoke to find the child dead beside her. The Journal entries show that her reading was not allowed to be neglected and there was the usual talking late into the night, 'fusses' with Claire and daily visits from Hogg; but there is a hint besides that maternity had touched a spring of emotion as yet latent in her character, and with the child's death something of the irresponsibility of her girlhood has gone for ever:

Sunday, March 19th. Dream that my little baby came to life again; that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire, and it lived. Awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day. Not in good spirits. Shelley is very unwell. Read Gibbon. Charles Clairmont comes. Hogg goes to town till dinner-time. Talk to Charles Clairmont about Skinner Street. They are very badly off there. I am afraid nothing can be done to save them. . . . C. C. says that he shall go to America; this I think a rather wild project in the Clairmont style. Play a game of chess with Clara. In the evening Shelley and Hogg play at chess. Shelley and Clara walk part of the way with Charles Clairmont. Play chess with Hogg, and then read Gibbon.

These visits of Hogg's, which had grown more and more

frequent, were not as altruistic as might be imagined, for correspondence shortly to be published¹ has revealed that he came in order to make love to Mary as he had made love to Harriet and as he was to enter later into a still more intimate relationship with another woman of Shelley's finding. Mary's reaction to his proposal presents a psychological problem to which *Political Justice* rather than *Passion* must provide a clue, for her letters show that she was not particularly attracted by Hogg, but conscientiously willing to take a lover for the sake of Free Love in the abstract. With a *naïveté* not always dissociated from Advanced Thought, the woman occasionally breaks through the philosopher; references to Claire betray a natural instinct to balance Shelley's 'constant companion' by an admirer of her own, and she puts off telling Shelley of the completion of his happiness that is in store for him, sure as she is (with a foretaste of his own doctrine in *Epipsychidion*²) that he will be pleased.

With Claire's removal the episode ended. No deep feelings had been involved, and that Mary never referred to it later nor bore any resentment against Hogg shows how readily she put it behind her when the nervous strain from which she suffered was relieved. This was entirely due to the irritation of Claire's constant presence, which at last made even Shelley realize that they would be happier left to themselves. ('Very quiet all the morning and happy, for Claire does not get up till 4,' records the Journal on March 4th.)

But to find another home for Claire was not at first easy; her return to Skinner Street was opposed by Fanny's aunts, Everina Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Bishop, who kept a successful school in Dublin and did not want the reputation of the niece who was to succeed them to be sullied by contact with Claire, who had assisted Mary in her 'elopement'. A situation as

¹ *Shelley Letters*, edited by Professor George Gordon, shortly to be published by Grayson & Grayson Limited.

² True Love in this differs from gold and clay
That to divide is not to take away. (Lines 160-1.)

governess-companion was another solution, but advertisements only brought one answer 'from a disconsolate widow'; and Godwin's efforts to persuade a friend of his, Mrs. Knapp, to take her were no more successful. At length, at the beginning of May, a lucky chance brought her the winning ticket in a lottery, and on the proceeds she decided to go and stay at Lynmouth.

Mary wrote in her Journal:

¹*Saturday, May 13th.* Clara goes; Shelley walks with her. C. C. comes to breakfast; talk. Shelley goes out with him. Read Spenser all day (finish Canto 8, Book V). Jefferson does not come till 5. Get very anxious about Shelley; go out to meet him; return; it rains. Shelley returns at half-past 6; the business is finished. After dinner Shelley is very tired, and goes to sleep. Read Ovid (60 lines). C. C. comes to tea. Talk of pictures.

I begin a new Journal with our regeneration.

III

MAY-AUGUST 1815



WITH Claire away at Lynmouth, Mary and Shelley set off for the south of Devon, no doubt directly for the sake of Shelley's

¹ Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 113, gives the following example of Shelley being 'jocosely horrible' between the above entry and the last line. In the original Mary has drawn a line after 'talk of pictures' as above, and the following entry is on the cover in her handwriting:

'a table spoonful of the spirit of aniseed with a small quantity of spermaceti.' and underneath in Shelley's smaller writing:

'9 drops of human blood—7 grains of gunpowder, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of putrified brain 13 mashed grave worms.'

and in his more sprawling writing:

The Pecksie, Dormouse

The Maie and her Elfin Knight.

'Pecksie', a name for Mary, may have come from Mrs. Trimmer's story, *The Robins*. 'Elfin Knight', from the *Faerie Queen* (1. iv. 42. 8) was Shelley's pseudonym when he sent the 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' to the *Examiner*, and he used the initials E. K. to sign a critique there on Godwin's *Mandeville*. Ingpen. *Letters*, pp. 529, 539, 566. 'Maie' was also used by Shelley for Mary.

health, as Mary says that he was showing pulmonary symptoms at this time, but also because they both loved travel for the sake of travel. Whether they called on Claire or not cannot be known for certain, as there are no entries in the *Journal* for this period, but Mary may well have wished not to disturb her if she really meant what she had written to Fanny: 'You told me you did not think I should ever be able to live alone. If you knew my constant tranquility, how cheerful and gay I am, perhaps you would alter your opinion.'¹ Although the romantic idiom is much in evidence ('It is in solitude that the powers concentrate round the soul'), her sense of humour breaks through in this as in all her correspondence, for Claire had a natural ease and charm as a letter-writer that shows her to advantage beside Mary—perhaps because a feather-brain is likely to have a lighter touch, or because the amateur often writes better letters than the author. The mistress of the letter is, after all, Dorothy Osborne, who has no books to her name.

By the end of July, Mary was waiting at Bristol while Shelley was in London seeing his solicitors. Distrustful of Claire's idyllics, she wrote to him anxiously:

2. . . Pray, is Clara with you? for I have inquired several times, and no letters; but seriously, it would not in the least surprise me (if you have written to her from London, and let her know that you are there without me) that she should have taken some such freak. . . .

Tomorrow is the 28th of July.^a Dearest, ought we not to have been together on that day? Indeed we ought, my love, as I shall shed some tears to think we are not. Do not be angry, dear love; your Pecksie is a good girl, and is quite well now again, except a headache, when she waits so anxiously for her love's letters.

Dearest, best Shelley, pray come to me; pray, pray, do not stay away from me! This is delightful weather, and, you better, we might have a delightful excursion to Tintern Abbey. My dear, dear

¹ This letter from Claire to Fanny, May 28th, 1815, is quoted in full by Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, pp. 117 seq.

² Dowden, vol. i, p. 524. Original in Bodleian MSS. B.

^a Anniversary of their departure to France.

love, I most earnestly and with tearful eyes beg that I may come to you, if you do not like to leave the searches after a house.

It is a long time to wait, even for an answer. Tomorrow may bring you news, but I have no hope, for you only set off to look after one in the afternoon, and what can be done at that hour of the day?

But in August they were settled in a house at Bishopgate,¹ where they were to enjoy another summer of happiness, made up of a more tranquil joy as the Thames is more temperate than the Rhine. With Peacock and Charles Clairmont they made an expedition in a wherry to the river's source above Lechlade

²The wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray;
And pallid Evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of Day:
Silence and Twilight, unbeloved of men,
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

If Shelley read this aloud, Peacock could claim that he had written a poem on the Thames, though 'five years he passed; and the length of five long winters' since he penned

³Let Fancy lead, from Trewsbury Mead,
With hazel-fringed, and copsewood deep,
Where scarcely seen, through brilliant green,
Thy infant waters softly creep,
To where the wide-expanding Nore
Beholds thee, with tumultuous roar,
Conclude thy devious race,
And rush, with Medway's confluent wave,
To seek, where mightier billows rave,
Thy giant sire's embrace.

¹ Described in *The Last Man*: 'Perdita's humble dwelling was situated the skirts of the most ancient portion; before it was stretched Bishopgate Heath which towards the east appeared interminable, and was bounded to the west by Chapel Wood and the grove of Virginia Water. Behind, the cottage was shadowed by the venerable fathers of the forest, under which the deer came to graze, and which for the most part hollow and decayed, formed fantastic groups that contrasted with the regular beauty of the younger trees. . . .'

² Shelley, 'A Summer Evening Churchyard, Lechlade', st. 1.

³ Peacock, *The Genius of the Thames*, II. vii, published in 1810.

And Shelley might cap both with verses from his favourite *Thalaba*:

'The little boat moved on.
 Through pleasant banks the quiet stream
 Went winding pleasantly;
 By fragrant fir-groves now it pass'd,
 And now, through alder-shores,
 Through green and fertile meadows now
 It silently ran by.
 The flag-flower blossom'd on its side,
 The willow-tresses waved,
 The flowing current furrow'd round
 The water-lily's floating leaf.

Peacock claimed that he was responsible for the great improvement in Shelley's health on this expedition by forcing him to take the prescription of 'three mutton chops, well peppered' instead of his usual diet of tea and bread and butter and 'a sort of spurious lemonade, made of some powder in a box, which, as he was reading at the time *The Tale of a Tub*, he called the "powder of pimperlompimp"'.² Although they were grateful to Peacock for his loyalty to them in London, neither Mary nor Shelley ever held him very deep in their affections, and at this time their youthful intolerance often made them under-estimate his real qualities because of his frequent disagreement with their opinions. His influence on them in its encouragement of classical reading was all to the good—and perhaps his genial materialism was no bad thing either! It proceeded from a steadier heart than Hogg's and a sounder head. Comparison between the two friends is inevitable: both scholars, but both 'worldly', they often shared a point of view repugnant to Shelley, and the references to each in the *Journal* show a similarity of tone.

October 14th, 1814 (Shelley). Peacock calls, I take some interest

¹ Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer*, xi. 34.

² Peacock's *Memoirs of Shelley*, Oxford edition, p. 54.

in this man, but no possible conduct of his would disturb my tranquillity.

20th (*Mary*). Hogg comes in the evening—^agives us a laughable account of Dr. Lambe and Mrs. Newton—^aget into an argument about virtue in which Hogg makes a sad bungle quite muddle [*sic*] on the point I perceive.

Hogg, ashamed of a youthful idealism that Peacock had never known, was always struggling after something of his maturity, a quality that Peacock derived from his exact appreciation of his own capacities and limitations, successfully compromising with life by asking of it no more than it could give him, and, at the end, he could contemplate with equanimity those volumes that were so exact a measure of himself and know nothing of Hogg's dissatisfaction. A brilliant man *manqué*, Hogg was too able not to know that he was a failure; his one attempt at original work, *Alexy Haimatoff*,¹ a wish-fulfilment rather than a work of art, lay buried with the youth of that undergraduate who had defied authority for the sake of Shelley and whose disowned ghost was to pursue him with immortality.

'It is already the end of August. Those leaves have lost their summer glossiness which, when I see you again, will be fluttering in the wind of Autumn. Such is mortal life,' Shelley wrote to Hogg, and, allowing for a certain conventional romantic melancholy, the words are an indication of a genuine sadness that was to be expressed a few months later in the poem of *Alastor*. Mary, writing afterwards in *The Last Man* with a penetration perhaps wiser than she knew even then, described Adrian (Shelley): '... the matchless brother of my soul, the sensitive and excellent Adrian, loving all, and beloved by all, yet seemed destined not to find the half of himself, which was

¹ He wrote several articles on classical subjects for periodicals and a record of his travels, *Two Hundred and Nine Days*, in 1827, besides, of course, his *Life of Shelley*. For further particulars about Hogg see *After Shelley*, by Sylvia Norman, 1934.

^a Inserted here from MS. Cf. Hogg's references to Mr. Newton in his *Life of Shelley* and Peacock's description of him as Mr. Escott in *Headlong Hall*. Dr. Lambe attended Keats when he was ill at Leigh Hunt's. What the story was is not known.

to complete his happiness. He often left us, and wandered by himself in the woods, or sailed in his little skiff, his books his only companions . . .¹

¹We look before and after,
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter,
With some pain is fraught . . .

He had every reason for happiness: friends, a house in the countryside he loved, and the companionship of Mary, looking forward to the birth of another child that, more lovingly attended, might be the stronger to survive. But there were troubles, too: Godwin's claims and the exasperating tedium of dealings with lawyers and money-lenders, and the petty quarrels with Claire that had stolen something of the 'summer glossiness' from his home with Mary: these were the terms of life that had to be transcended since he was not a Peacock to compromise with them. He challenges himself as much as Coleridge in the verse,

²Ah! wherefore didst thou build thine hope
On the false earth's inconstancy?
Did thine own mind afford no scope
Of love, or moving thoughts to thee?
That natural scenes or human smiles
Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles?

The cause of his unrest lay deeper; in the stirring of a more virile poetic impulse and the presage of tragedy to come.

IV

JANUARY-MAY 1816

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ON January 24th, at the Bishopgate house, Mary's second child was born and called William after her father—a further evidence, if any were needed, of patient loyalty and affection on

¹ Shelley, 'Ode to a Skylark'.

² Stanza 4 of the poem to Coleridge ('Oh! there are spirits in the air'), 1815.

the part of a young man of twenty-three and a young woman of nineteen towards the middle-aged philosopher who was persuading them to raise money for him by devices that made even Shelley hesitate: 'I might destroy Longdill's confidence in the *regularity* and prudence of my conduct at a time when perhaps the whole success of the affair with my father depends on its preservation.'¹ While he accepted benefits, Godwin avoided contamination from his benefactor:

'I return your cheque because no consideration can induce me to utter a cheque drawn by you and containing my name. . . . I hope you will send me a duplicate of it by the post which will reach me on Saturday morning. You may make it payable to Joseph Hume or James Martin, or any other name in the whole directory.'

It is not to be wondered at that Shelley was sometimes impatient in his letters, so that Godwin said of him later, 'I know that Shelley's temper was occasionally fiery, resentful and indignant.'

Godwin must bear a large share of responsibility for Shelley's bitterness at this time; the defection of the Newtons and the Boinvilles (on October 8th, after their flight, the *Journal* records the receipt of a letter 'cold and even sarcastic from Mrs. Boinville'²) was of no great importance, and he did not want casual visitors when he settled at Bishopgate ('I am not wretch enough to tolerate an acquaintance'), but Godwin he had expected to stand out against the general ostracism. With that alternation of pomposity and outburst that always characterized his letters to Godwin, even when he had outgrown his influence, Shelley now complained to him:

In my judgment neither I, nor your daughter, nor her offspring, ought to receive the treatment which we encounter on every side. It has perpetually appeared to me to have been your especial duty

¹ The Chancery case in connexion with the Shelley estate is very complicated. It is best explained in a letter written by Shelley to Godwin on January 7th, 1816. Ingpen, vol. i, p. 448. P. W. Longdill was Shelley's solicitor.

² Acquaintance was afterwards resumed, and Mrs. Boinville lent Mary her copy of *Queen Mab* in 1839.

to see that, as far as mankind value your good opinion, we were dealt justly by, and that a young family, innocent and benevolent and united, should not be confounded with prostitutes and seducers. . . .

Alastor, published in March, was completely neglected by the critics, and Southey, to whom Shelley sent a copy with a long letter confiding the 'disappointment of some youthful hopes and subsequent misfortunes of a heavier nature', did not even acknowledge it.¹ This, combined with the 'neglect or enmity of almost every-one but those who are supported by my resources', determined him either to go abroad or 'to resort to the most distant and solitary regions of Cumberland or Scotland'.

But, in the event, circumstances of whose background and implications they were ignorant took Mary and Shelley to Switzerland. Claire had returned to them after a visit to London, where she had been trying to get a stage engagement at Drury Lane where Byron was on the Board of Management. She exerted all her influence on the side of going abroad; reminding them of the 'six weeks' tour' and suggesting, too, that if they went to Switzerland they might meet Byron at Geneva. A fellow exile who had rebelled against society, he would not ostracize the Shelleys and he would afford inspiration and worthy companionship to another poet.

The thought of meeting Byron was very attractive, and on May 3rd they set out, Shelley and Mary and little William ('Willman', later 'Willmouse') and Claire.²

¹ In *Letters about Shelley* (edited R. Garnett, 1917) Dr. Garnett suggests that 'Shelley's letter with the copy of "Alastor" would reach Southey near the time of the death of his son Herbert which would account for its remaining unanswered'. Peacock thought that it was in 1814, after Shelley's return from Switzerland, that Southey made to him the remark quoted by Hogg, 'A man ought to be able to live with any woman. You see that I can and so ought you.' In 1820 Shelley was in correspondence with Southey again, when he asked him if he was responsible for the review of *The Revolt of Islam* in the *Quarterly*. Southey denied this but took the opportunity of expressing his disapproval of Shelley's conduct and private life.

² The account of their journey can be found in the series of four letters

... To what a different scene are we now arrived! To the warm sunshine, and to the humming of sun-loving insects. From the windows of our hotel we see the lovely lake, blue as the heavens which it reflects, and sparkling with golden beams. The opposite shore is sloping and covered with vines, which, however, do not so early in the season add to the beauty of the prospect. Gentlemen's seats are scattered over these banks, behind which rise the various ridges of black mountains, and towering far above, in the midst of its snowy Alps, the majestic Mont Blanc, highest and queen of all. Such is the view reflected by the lake; it is a bright summer scene without any of that sacred solitude and deep seclusion that delighted us at Lucerne. We have not yet found out any very agreeable walks, but you know our attachment to water excursions. We have hired a boat, and every evening, at about six o'clock, we sail on the lake, which is delightful, whether we glide over a glassy surface or are speeded along by a strong wind. . . .

We do not enter into society here, yet our time passes swiftly and delightfully.

We read Latin and Italian during the heats of noon, and when the sun declines we walk in the garden of the hotel, looking at the rabbits, relieving fallen cockchafers, and watching the motions of a myriad of lizards, who inhabit a southern wall of the garden. You know that we have just escaped from the gloom of winter and of London; and coming to this delightful spot during this divine weather, I feel as happy as a new-fledged bird, and hardly care what twig I fly to, so that I may try my new-found wings. A more experienced bird may be more difficult in its choice of a bower; but, in my present temper of mind, the budding flowers, the fresh grass of spring, and the happy creatures about me that live and enjoy these pleasures, are quite enough to afford me exquisite delight, even though clouds should shut out Mont Blanc from my sight. Adieu!

M. S.

(1 and 2 by Mary Shelley, 3 and 4 by Shelley) published with the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, in Shelley's Prose Works.

V

MAY-AUGUST 1816



ON May 25th there was a great clatter outside the Hotel Dejean at Sécheron as a magnificent equipage¹ arrived before the door, and *Monsieur le propriétaire* hurried out to assist the English Milord to alight. Irritably, Lord Byron ignored the proffered arm (did the man think he was a cripple to be lifted in and out of a carriage?), and with a cynical remark to the dark young man who was with him, got out, and stood leaning on his sword-stick by the coach, watching his three men-servants as they began to unstrap the luggage. He wouldn't hobble into the place before all these people, the toadying proprietor and his satellites and the English tourists whose eyes he felt scorching him through the lace curtains behind which they were peeping. He had travelled a thousand miles, but still he was not free from the prying eyes and prattling tongues of his countrymen.

Polidori,² the young Italian doctor, begged his lordship to

¹ Moore's *Life of Byron*, 1832 edition, vol. iii, p. 243: 'Lord Byron travelled in a huge coach, copied from the celebrated one of Napoleon, taken at Gemappe, with additions. Besides a *lit de repos*, it contained a library, a plate-chest, and every apparatus for dining in it.'

² John William Polidori was the son of an English mother and the Tuscan, Gaetano Polidori, who had been secretary to Alfieri. He took his medical degree at Edinburgh and was only twenty when Byron took him abroad as his physician. His references to Shelley in the diary which he kept (and for which Murray promised him £500) are not without interest, although they are as unreliable as his dates. The diary was published in 1911, edited by W. M. Rossetti, who was the son of his younger sister Frances, from a manuscript in the possession of Charlotte Polidori. 'I regret to say that my Aunt, on receiving the MS. back from me, took it into her head to read it through—a thing which I fancy she had never done before, or certainly had not done for very many years—and that she found in it some few passages which she held to be "improper", and, with the severe virtue so characteristic of an English maiden aunt, she determined that those passages should no longer exist. I can remember one about Byron and a chambermaid at Ostend and another, later on, about Polidori himself. My Aunt took the trouble of copy-

go in, for the heat and dust of the day's journey must have fatigued him. Why should a man in the prime of his life who could swim the Rhone and the Hellespont be tired from sitting in a jolting coach? But he had to go in some time; it was a pity to flatter Polidori that he had persuaded him, but there was no doubt that in the crowd of hotel servants that had now gathered he could escape less conspicuously. Trailing the sword-stick, he swaggered into the hotel with the swinging gait that least betrayed his lameness.

Bathed and changed into a suit with a velvet jacket in his favourite green, he was ready to meet the author of *Queen Mab*:¹ the Sussex squire's son who had run away with the daughter of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. He would have to meet as well the little idiot who had thrown herself at him when she came for a part at Drury Lane, and that might be a bore; for she hadn't become his leading lady, she had become his mistress—a very different thing.² If she kept quiet and did not pester him she might provide some entertainment, and so far it was encouraging that she hadn't wanted to boast of their association; on the contrary, she had implored him not to mention it to the Shelleys, 'the whole tribe of Otaheite philosophers', as she called them.³

ing out the whole Diary, minus the peccant passages, and she then ruthlessly destroyed the original MS.'

Mary Shelley wrote in 1835 to Gaetano Polidori asking for information about Alfieri when she was engaged on her Italian 'Lives' for Lardner's *Encyclopaedia*. The letter (which was in 'fairly idiomatic, but by no means faultless Italian') is quoted in English on p. 220 of the *Diary*.

¹ According to Polidori's diary they met on May 27th, as Byron was getting out of his boat after rowing back from Cologne, p. 99.

² In a letter to Augusta Leigh, Byron wrote of Claire '... as to all these "mistresses", Lord help me—I have had but one. Now don't scold—but what could I do? A foolish girl, in spite of all I could say or do, would come after me, or rather went before, for I found her here, and I have had all the plague possible to persuade her to go back again, but at last she went. ... I was not in love nor have any love left for any, but I could not exactly play the Stoic with a woman who had scrambled eight hundred miles to unphilosophize me. ...' (Quoted from *Astarte*, R. Milbanke, p. 267.)

³ From Claire's letter to Byron written at Paris to tell him she was on the way to Geneva. She told him to address her c/o Poste Restante, Geneva,

No doubt he could put her off all right. Women should be only incidentals, at the best of times. There was a boat out there on the lake . . . he might get a boat and sail himself . . . it would probably 'inspire' him to some more verses.

. . . 'This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
To waft me from distraction; once I loved
Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
Sounds sweet as if a Sister's voice reproved,
That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

But if Byron had come to Geneva on a whim, for Shelley's sake he stayed on there unregretfully. The younger poet, so idealistic in spite of the disillusion which he said overwhelmed him; so irresponsible in his carelessness of what he ate or drank or wore, but level-headed enough when it came to the complicated Chancery suit with his father or arranging Harriet's regular allowance; so argumentative but never out of temper, he had an intelligence and an integrity that Byron had to respect. At times he could not resist baiting him, affecting the Regency Dandy who had written a poem of which forty thousand copies were sold in a day, the crack shot who could hit a half-crown in a cleft stick at twenty paces, the man of the world who could take nothing seriously. "I will sing you an Albanian song," cried Lord Byron, Moore records in an anecdote that Mary told him; "now, be sentimental and give me all your attention." It was a strange, wild howl that he gave forth; but such as, he declared, was an exact imitation of the savage Albanian mode—laughing, the while, at our disappointment, who had expected a wild Eastern melody.² Any one more self-

under the name of Clairville, as he had said that he liked the name Claire but *Clairmont* had unpleasant memories of 'that ugly woman'.

¹ *Childe Harold*, canto 3, st. 85 (Lake Lemán).

² Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* (1830), vol. ii, p. 24.

It is sometimes said that this incident is the source of the Shelleys' name for Byron, Albè or the Albaneser, but it is much more likely to come from the initials with which he signed his letters, *L.B.*, later *N.B.*, when he had taken the name of Noel. In a letter from Professor Dowden to Dr. Garnett, Feb. 17th, 1884, there is another suggestion, which he did not take up, however, in

conscious than Shelley would have been uneasy with him (as Trelawny was to be later), but Shelley only wrote to Peacock:¹ 'Lord Byron is an exceedingly interesting person; and as such, is it not to be regretted that he is a slave to the vilest and most vulgar prejudices, and as mad as the winds?'

Together they made an excursion round the lake of Geneva in a sailing-boat, and in a squall off Meillerie were in danger of being drowned.

· ²My companion [wrote Shelley to Peacock], an excellent swimmer, took off his coat. I did the same and we sat with our arms crossed, every instant expecting to be swamped. . . . I felt in this near prospect of death a mixture of sensations among which terror entered but subordinately. My feelings would have been less painful had I but been alone; but I knew that my companion would have attempted to save me, and I was overcome with humiliation when I thought that his life might have been risked to save mine.

At Lausanne they visited the house where Gibbon had written the last chapters of *The Decline and Fall*. 'My companion', writes Shelley again, 'gathered some acacia leaves to preserve in remembrance of him. I refrained from doing so, fearing to outrage the greater and more sacred name of Rousseau.'³

'This much is certain, that before we return we shall have seen, and felt, and heard, a multiplicity of things which will haunt our talk and make us a little better worth knowing than we were before our departure.'⁴ However akin this sentiment may be to the popular fallacy that 'travel broadens the mind'—forgetful that 'we receive but what we give'—this journey was to have sufficient justification in *The Prisoner of Chillon*, and his *Life*: the Shelleys would both have known Madame Cottin's tale called *Claire d'Albe*, as, according to Hogg, Harriet used to read it aloud.

¹ Quoted by Dowden, vol. ii, p. 12. The passage is not given in the letter of that date in Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 502, but is restored in the Julian edition, vol. ix, p. 181.

² Letter to Peacock, July 12th, 1816. Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 488 seqq. Byron is referred to throughout as 'my companion'.

³ He had taken *Julie* or *La Nouvelle Héloïse* with him and on June 25th read it 'all day'.

⁴ Letter to Peacock, July 17th.

part of the third canto of *Childe Harold* composed, and Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* conceived, during it.

This was not the only expedition Shelley undertook. From the little Villa Chapuis, separated by a vineyard from Byron's larger Villa Diodati¹ above, where he had removed in exasperation to escape the curiosity of the hotel guests, Shelley set out with Mary and Claire at half-past eight on the morning of July 20th to visit the Valley of Chamoni.² It was the first sight of Mont Blanc from a bridge over the Arve that inspired Shelley's poem, 'composed under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects which it attempts to describe; and, as an undisciplined overflowing of the soul, rests its claim to approbation on an attempt to imitate the untamable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from which those feelings sprang'.³

They saw the source of the Arveiron:

Journal, July 23rd. . . . We drink the water of the Arveiron and return. After dinner think it will rain, and Shelley goes alone to the glacier of Bosson. I stay at home. Read several tales of Voltaire. In the evening I copy Shelley's letter to Peacock.

They went on to Montanvert⁴ to see the Mer de Glace, but the rain forced them to return after they had got half-way.

When we had mounted considerably we turned to look on the scene. A dense white mist covered the vale, and tops of scattered pines peeping above were the only objects that presented themselves. . . .

¹ Where Milton had been entertained in 1639 by the Genevese theologian Giovanni, or John, Diodati.

² An account of this expedition is given in the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* in the form of two letters that Shelley wrote to Peacock, and descriptions of the scenery occur in *The Last Man*, by Mary Shelley, chap. iii, and in *Frankenstein*, chap. ix and earlier chapters.

³ Shelley's Introduction to the *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* quoted by Mary in Notes to Poems of 1816.

⁴ Described in *Frankenstein*, chap. ix. See Note A at end of chapter, p. 65, for correction of the account of Shelley's entry in the hotel visitors' book given in Dowden, vol. ii, p. 30, and Ingpen, p. 514.

The next day they were more fortunate, though the ascent was dangerous.

Our guides desired us to pass quickly, for it is said that sometimes the least sound will accelerate the [avalanches'] descent. . . . We dined (M., C. and I) on the grass, in the open air, surrounded by this scene. The air is piercing and clear. We returned down the mountain sometimes encompassed by the driving vapours, sometimes cheered by the sunbeams, and arrived at our inn by seven o'clock.

On the following morning they went back through the rain to St. Martin, where they spent the night, before continuing their homeward journey.

Saturday, July 27th. It is a most beautiful day, without a cloud. We set off at 12. The day is hot, yet there is a fine breeze. We pass by the Great Waterfall, which presents an aspect of singular beauty. The wind carries it away from the rock, and on towards the north, and the fine spray into which it is entirely dissolved passes before the mountains like a mist.

The other cascade has very little water, and is consequently not so beautiful as before. The evening of the day is calm and beautiful. Evening is the only time I enjoy travelling. The horses went fast, and the plain opened before us. We saw Jura and the Lake like old friends. I longed to see my pretty babe. At 9 after much enquiring and stupidity, we find the road and alight at Diodati. We converse with Lord Byron till 12, and then go down to Chapuis, kiss our babe and go to bed.

The Journal for the next few weeks gives a typical account of the life led by the two households, though it does not convey the importance of Shelley's influence on Byron's literary development and ignores the relationship between the poet and the girl who was assiduously copying for him the third canto of *Childe Harold*.

Sunday, July 28th. (Montalègre.) I read Voltaire's 'Romans'. Shelley reads Lucretius and talks with Claire. After dinner, he goes out in the boat with Lord Byron; and we all go up to Diodati in the evening. This is the second anniversary since Shelley's and my union.

Thursday, August 1st. Make a balloon for Shelley, after which he goes up to Diodati, to dine and spend the evening. Read twelve pages of Curtius. Write; and read the *Réveries* of Rousseau. Shelley reads Pliny's Letters.

Friday, August 2nd. I go to the town with Shelley, to buy a telescope for his birthday present. In the evening Lord Byron and he go out in the boat, and after their return Shelley and Claire go up to Diodati; I do not, for Lord Byron did not seem to wish it. Shelley returns with a letter from Longdill which requires his return to England. This puts us in very bad spirits. I read *Réveries*, and *Adèle et Théodore* de Madame de Genlis, and Shelley reads Pliny's Letters.

Sunday, August 4th. Shelley's twenty-fourth birthday. Write; read *Tableau de Famille*. Go out with Shelley in the boat, and read aloud to him the fourth book of Virgil. After dinner we go up to Diodati, but return soon. I read Curtius with Shelley, and finish the first volume, after which we go out in the boat to set up the balloon, but there is too much wind; we set it up from the land, but it takes fire as soon as it is up. I finish the *Réveries* of Rousseau. Shelley reads and finishes Pliny's Letters, and begins the *Panegyric* of Trajan.

Under the influence of 'Monk' Lewis, who came to visit Byron on August 14th, discussion ranged widely at Diodati over the supernatural subjects which had always fascinated Shelley. The Journal shows him a little distressed that, as an 'atheist', he is not considered eligible to join in.

Journal. Sunday, August 18th. See 'Apollo's Sexton,' who tells us many mysteries of his trade. We talk of Ghosts. Neither Lord Byron nor M. G. L. seem to believe in them; and they both agree, in the very face of reason, that none could believe in ghosts without believing in God. I do not think all the persons who profess to discredit these visitations, really discredit them; or, if they do, in the daylight, are not admonished, by the approach of darkness and midnight to think more respectfully of the world of shadows.

Besides his stories, Lewis also told them something of the horrors of the slave trade which he had seen at first hand on his visit to the plantations in the West Indies; and before he left he

got Shelley, Byron, and Polidori to witness his signature to a codicil of his will in which the heir to his Jamaica estates was required to live for three months every three years on the property and forbidden to sell any negroes or to take away any of the amenities that he had provided for them.

Meanwhile, Mary was working at a novel which had for its theme a conception far more original and more blood-curdling than any that the 'thin-sheeted phantoms' of the Monk could provide. One wet evening at Diodati, she and Shelley, Byron and Polidori found a book of German ghost-stories and read them aloud. 'We will each write a ghost-story,' said Byron, and all four set to work.

Byron sketched out part of a tale which he afterwards attached to *Mazeppa*: Shelley began, but did not finish, an episode from his early life: Polidori's attempt, 'something very shocking', was laughed out of court; but Mary went on with the wager to the end and produced *Frankenstein*.²

NOTE A

Shelley's Entry in the Hotel Visitors' Book at Montanvert

From the original page in the possession of Lord Crewe, which, by his kind permission, I have been able to consult, it is clear that the accounts given by Lord Broughton (*Italy: Remarks made on Several Visits*, i. 1-2) and W. M. Rossetti (*Memoir of Shelley*, 64), from which Dowden and Ingpen quote, are incorrect. No one has added *μωρός* and Byron did not deface Shelley's Greek, but the record of Claire Clairmont. See *Among my Books*, Lord Crewe, 1898.

(Date)	(Name)	(Address)	(Destination)	(Remarks)		
1816 23	Juillet	Percy B. Shelley	Supex	L'Enfer	είμι φιλανθρωπος δημοκρατικός τ' αθεός τε	
		Mad. M. W. G.	London	England	L'Enfer	ὁ ἄφρων (etc.)
		Mad. C. C.	Clifton			

The entries are about half-way down the page, all three in Shelley's handwriting. It was probably the panegyric on 'Nature and Nature's

¹ 'The Vampyre: a Tale', 1819.

² For a full account of *Frankenstein* see Appendix D.

VI

AUGUST-OCTOBER 1816



BUT the days on the lake and the evenings over the fireside at Diodati were not to pass undisturbed by reminders of cares left behind in England. Fanny wrote to plead for Godwin, hinting that in their happiness Mary and Shelley did not altogether appreciate his difficulties.

¹I think it my duty to tell you the real state of the case for I know you deceive yourself about things. If Papa could get on with his novel in good spirits, I think it would perhaps be his best.

Unaware of sacrifices already made to replenish that bottomless pit, Fanny in her affection and soft-heartedness did not see beyond the unhappy evidences of poverty. True, however, to an upbringing where private worries were not allowed to obtrude on wider interests, she tells them other news: of Coleridge, 'improved in health under the care of the Apothecary,'² writing fast a continuation of *Christabel*; of the Lambs, 'highly delighted with Clifton'; the death of Sheridan, 'Papa has visited his grave many times since'; the political situation for which Robert Owen's socialism is to be the panacea. She clearly does not believe in it, but she likes the man; 'he told me the other day that he wishes our mother was living, as he had never met with a person who thought so exactly as he did or who would have so warmly and zealously entered into his plans'.

Of herself she says little, in order not to depress them, for God' which the first visitor had written right across the top half of the page that induced Shelley to put his 'remarks'. His Greek is without accents, but the quotation in answer to him is in two lines with accents. 'Mad.' is heavily and 'C. C.' and 'Clifton' lightly crossed out.

¹ Letter quoted by Dowden, vol. ii, p. 39.

² Mr. Gillman at Highgate.

she suffers often from low spirits, but she has hopes that when her Aunt Everina comes over from Ireland she will take her back to the school. She begs for anything that Shelley has written and for fuller news of what they are doing, particularly for details of the great poet with whom they seem to be living on such familiar terms.

Write small, for Mamma complains of the postage of a double letter. I pay the full postage of all the letters I send, and you know I have not a *sou* of my own. Mamma is much better, though not without rheumatism. William is better than he ever was in his life. I am not well; my mind always keeps my body in a fever; but never mind me. Adieu, my dear sister. Let me entreat you to consider seriously all that I have said concerning your father.

Yours very affectionately,

FANNY.

As if conscious that they had a little neglected Fanny, the Journal shows Mary and Shelley trying to make amends.

Journal. Saturday, August 10th. Write to Fanny. Shelley writes to Charles. We then go to town to buy books and a watch for Fanny. Read Curtius after my return; translate. In the evening Shelley and Lord Byron go out in the boat. Translate, and when they return go up to Diodati. Shelley reads Tacitus. A writ of arrest comes for Polidori for having 'cassé ses lunettes et fait tomber son chapeau' of the apothecary who sells bad magnesia.¹

Fanny's depression, a true inheritance of Mary Wollstonecraft, and her unencouraging report of Godwin's situation did

¹ This incident was one of many 'scrapes' into which Polidori got himself, and contributed to Byron's decision to dispense with his services. His own account in his Diary is as follows, p. 136: 'An apothecary sold some bad magnesia to L. B. Found it bad by experiment of sulphuric acid colouring it red rose-colour. Servants spoke about it. Appointed Castan to see experiment; came; impudent; refused to go out; collared him, sent him out, broke spectacles. Laid himself on a wall for three hours; refused to see experiments. Saw L. B., told him his tale before two physicians. Brought me to trial before five judges; had an advocate to plead. I pleaded for myself; laughed at the advocate. Lost his cause on the plea of calumny; made me pay 12 florins for the broken spectacles and costs. Magnesia chiefly alumina, as proved by succenate [?] and carbonate [sic] of ammonia.'

not complete the tale of trouble in which Skinner Street was involving them. About this time they became aware of Claire's secret attachment to Byron and decided that they must return to England to look after her when her child was born so that her mother should not suspect anything. Shelley's unconventional views on marriage were not based on any excuse for promiscuity, and although he still admired Byron and had not yet discovered his real nature, he could not help but realize that this *liaison* was a very different matter from 'the marriage of true minds' that had brought about his own union with Mary.¹

Journal. Wednesday, August 28th. Packing. Shelley goes to town. Work. Polidori comes down, and afterwards Lord Byron. After dinner we go upon the water; pack; and Shelley goes up to Diodati. Shelley reads *Histoire de la Revolution* par Rabault.

Thursday, August 29th. We depart from Geneva at 9 in the morning.

Arrived in England, Mary and Claire went to Bath and Shelley stayed in London to discuss money matters as usual with Longdill and to negotiate with Murray for the third canto of *Childe Harold* for which Byron wanted 2,000 guineas. When she had settled Claire in lodgings, Mary joined Shelley for a fortnight at Marlow, where he was staying with Peacock and his mother; 'a period', says Peacock,² 'of unbroken sunshine. The neighbourhood of Marlow abounds with beautiful walks;

¹ Byron wrote to Augusta Leigh: 'I forgot to tell you—that the *Demoiselle*—who returned to England from Geneva—went there to produce a new baby B., who is now about to make his appearance.' *Astarte*, p. 280.

The fragment of a letter to Byron from Shelley at Bath, September 29th, 1816, shows the opinion that the author of *Laon and Cythna* held with regard to the rumoured relationship between Byron and Augusta Leigh. The letter above would have shocked him far more deeply than the truth about the 'calumny'.

'I saw Kinnaird, and had a long talk with him. He informed me that Lady Byron was now in perfect health, that she was living with your sister. I felt much pleasure from this intelligence. I consider the latter part of it as affording a decisive contradiction to the only important calumny that ever was advanced against you. On this ground, at least, it will become the world hereafter to be silent. . . .' Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 522.

² *Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 60. Oxford, 1909.

the river scenery is also fine. We took every day a long excursion either on foot or on the water.' Mary must have been grateful for this respite from Claire, but even here she did not have Shelley to herself—there was Peacock!

When she returned to Bath, Mary continued *Frankenstein* and took lessons in drawing from a Mr. West.

Saturday, October 5th (Mary). Read Clarendon and Curtius; walk with Shelley. Shelley reads Tasso.

Sunday, October 6th (Shelley). On this day Mary put her head through the door and said, 'Come and look; here's a cat eating roses; she'll turn into a woman; when beasts eat these roses they turn into men and women.'

(Mary). Read Clarendon all day; finish the eleventh book. Shelley reads Tasso.

Tuesday, October 8th. Letter from Fanny. Drawing lesson. Walk out with Shelley to the South Parade; read Clarendon, and draw. In the evening work, and Shelley reads *Don Quixote*; afterwards reads *Memoirs of the Princess of Bareith* aloud.

Wednesday, October 9th. Read Curtius; finish the Memoirs; draw. In the evening a very alarming letter comes from Fanny. Shelley goes immediately to Bristol; we sit up for him till 2 in the morning, when he returns, but brings no particular news.

Thursday, October 10th. Shelley goes again to Bristol and obtains more certain trace. Work and read. He returns at 11 o'clock.

Friday, October 11th. He sets off to Swansea. Work and read.

Saturday, October 12th. He returns with the worst account. A miserable day. Two letters from Papa. Buy mourning, and work in the evening.

At Swansea on the morning of October 10th Fanny Imlay had been found dead in the room where she had spent the night at the Mackworth Arms Inn. There was a bottle of laudanum beside her and the watch that Mary had sent from Geneva. She also left a note:

'I have long determined that the best thing I could do was to put an end to the existence of a being whose birth was unfortunate and whose life has only been a series of pain to those persons who have

¹ Dowden, vol. ii, p. 57.

hurt their health in endeavouring to promote her welfare. Perhaps to hear of my death may give you pain, but you will soon have the blessing of forgetting that such a creature ever existed as

Both Shelley and Mary were deeply shocked; their sorrow sharpened perhaps by some remorse that out of the wealth of their happiness they had not given more to her.

'Friend had I known thy secret grief
Her voice did quiver as we parted,
Yet knew I not that heart was broken
From which it came, and I departed
Heeding not the words then spoken.
Misery—O Misery
This world is all too wide for thee.
Some secret woes had been mine own,
And they had taught me that the good—
The pain—
And that for whom the lone and weary
The load of life is long and dreary;
Some hopes were buried in my heart
Whose spectres haunted me with sadness.

Godwin's reaction to the news was typically selfish; he wrote to Mary, the first letter since she left his house:

I did indeed expect it. October 13, 1816.

I cannot but thank you for your strong expression of sympathy.

I do not see, however, that that sympathy can be of any service to me; but it is best. My advice and earnest prayer is that you would avoid anything that leads to publicity.

¹ The unpublished first line and second stanza are given here from the privately printed *Verse and Prose* (Ingpen and Shelley-Rolls, 1934). In a note Ingpen says: 'The following well-known verses on Fanny Godwin and William Shelley [Thy little footsteps . . .] are printed here because, in the MS., Shelley has connected them in one lament. They are written together on one side of a single sheet of paper. On the reverse of the sheet Shelley has made a sketch of a grave and added the following words:

'These cannot be forgotten. It is not my fault—it is not to be alluded to.' There are also drawings of vases and pots, on one of which Shelley has written: 'Drew this flower-pot in October 1816 and now it is 1817.'

Boscombe MSS. S.

Go not to Swansea; disturb not the silent dead; do nothing to destroy the obscurity she so much desired that now rests upon the event. It was, as I said, her last wish; it was the motive that led her from London to Bristol and from Bristol to Swansea.

I said that your sympathy could be of no service to me, but I retract the assertion; by observing what I have just recommended to you, it may be of infinite service. Think what is the situation of my wife and myself, now deprived of all our children but the youngest [William]; so do not expose us to those idle questions, which to a mind in anguish is one of the severest of all trials. We are at this moment in doubt whether, during the first shock, we shall say that she is gone to Ireland to her aunt, a thing that has been in contemplation. Do not take from us the power to exercise our own discretion. We shall hear again tomorrow.

What I have most of all in horror is the public papers, and I thank you for your caution, as it might act on this.

We have so conducted ourselves that not one person in our home has the smallest apprehension of the truth. Our feelings are less tumultuous than deep. God only knows what they may become. . . .

This 'discretion' is displayed in a letter to Mr. Baxter where Godwin tells him that poor Fanny contracted an inflammatory fever in Wales which carried her off. And on her part Mrs. Godwin tried to distract attention from her own share of responsibility for the tragedy by declaring that all three girls were in love with Shelley and that 'the eldest killed herself on his account'. There is no doubt that Fanny had enjoyed her correspondence with him and was very much attached to him, but if she had been 'in love' she would have been more likely to be driven to despair when he ran away with her sister than at this later date. To have known that he would write her epitaph in a few poignant lines, quoted wherever his fame is known, would have made amends to her, beyond what she dreamed, for a life, modest and devoted, that knew happiness all too little.

VII

DECEMBER 1816



A BRIEF hope of better things to come lies behind Mary's entry in the Journal for December 6th: 'Letter from Shelley; he has gone to visit Leigh Hunt'; for on December 1st an article had appeared in the *Examiner* praising the work of 'three young writers, who appear to us to promise considerable addition of strength to the new school, John Hamilton Reynolds, John Keats, and Percy Bysshe Shelley'. The author of *Alastor* is called 'a very striking and original thinker'. This was the first public recognition of Shelley's work although not his first contact with Leigh Hunt,¹ and, much encouraged by it, he took the opportunity to stay with Peacock at Marlow in order to look for a house in the district and to be near enough to London to cultivate Hunt's acquaintance.

In his absence, Mary writes happily:

²New Bond Street, Bath.

December 6,^a 1816.

Sweet Elf,

I was awakened this morning by my pretty babe, and was dressed time enough to take my lesson from Mr. West, and (thank God) finished that tedious ugly picture I have been so long about. I have also finished the fourth chapter of 'Frankenstein', which is a very long one, and I think you would like it.

And where are you? and what are you doing, my blessed love? I hope and trust that, for my sake, you did not go outside this wretched day, while the wind howls and the clouds seem to threaten rain. And what did my love think of as he rode along—did he

¹ Shelley had written from Oxford to the *Examiner* proposing an association of Friends of Liberty. He had also called on Hunt a little later about a poem, which Hunt advised him not to publish, and when Hunt was undergoing imprisonment for his libel on the Prince Regent made him a 'princely offer'. This offer was not accepted.

² Dowden, vol. ii, p. 61. (a) In the original this is 5 (Bodleian MSS.).

think about our home, our babe, and his poor Pecksie? But I am sure you did, and thought of them all with joy and hope. But in the choice of a residence, dear Shelley, pray be not too quick or attach yourself too much to one spot. Ah! were you indeed a winged Elf, and could soar over mountains and seas, and could pounce on the little spot! A house with a lawn, near a river or lake, noble trees or divine mountains—that should be our little mouse-hole to retire to. . . .

'His flight was always to escape from, never to pursue'; there is a deeper significance in Hogg's pungent description of Shelley walking, for never was man less guilty of *hubris* (ὕβρις) doomed to have his happiness more promptly overcast by swift-following clouds. He now returned to Bath, on December 14th, animated by new hope and confidence, to receive on the next day a letter from Hookham telling him that Harriet, of whom he had heard nothing for several weeks, had committed suicide. Her body had been taken from the Serpentine on the previous Tuesday. 'She was called Harriet Smith and the verdict was Found Drowned.'¹

He hurried back to London that afternoon for further news and to claim the children, Ianthe and Charles, as Hookham had said they were in London; though in fact they had been for some time at Warwick in the care of a schoolmaster called Kendall. In his letter² to Mary the next day he reports that Longdill has warned him that the Westbrooks may bring a suit to deprive him of their custody, but he is confident that a legal marriage with Mary will leave no grounds for it; he attributes the main responsibility for Harriet's death to her family, particularly Eliza, who had apparently persuaded their father to forbid her his house.

Mary in her reply welcoming the children shows little appreciation of what were to be the repercussions of the tragedy.

¹ Dowden, vol. ii, p. 67. 'In fact it was "found dead."' *Shelley in England*, Ingpen.

² This very important letter is given in full, with notes, at the end of the chapter. See p. 75.

¹. . . Poor dear Fanny, if she had lived until this moment she would have been saved, for my house would have been a proper asylum for her. . . .

. . . ^aThese Westbrooks! But they have nothing to do with your sweet babes; they are yours, and I do not see the pretence for a suit; but tomorrow I shall know all. . . .^a

. . . Come down to me, sweetest, as soon as you can, for I long to see you, and embrace. As to the event you allude to, be governed by your friends and prudence as to when it ought to take place; but it must be in London. Claire has just looked in; she begs you not to stay away long, to be more explicit in your letters, and sends her love.

You tell me to write a long letter, and I would, but that my ideas wander and my hand trembles. Come back to reassure me, my Shelley, and bring with you your darling Ianthe and Charles. Thank your kind friends. I long to hear about Godwin.

Your affectionate [companion]^b

MARY [W. G.].^c

'The event', that is the legal ceremony of marriage, took place in London at St. Mildred's, Bread Street, on December 30th.

Mary entered in the Journal (1817):

²*Monday, 16th (MS.)*. I have omitted writing my Journal for some time. Shelley goes to London and returns, I go with him; spend the time between Leigh Hunt's and Godwin's. A marriage takes place on the 29th [December^d] 1816. Draw; read Lord Chesterfield and Locke.

And Godwin wrote in his diary:

December 30th. M. Write to Hume. Call on Mildred W. P. B. S., M. W. G., and M. J.; they dine and sup; tea Constable's w. Wells, Wallace, Patrick, and Miss C. See No. XVIII. *infra* page ult.

¹ Dec. 17th, 1816. Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 176. Original in Bodleian MSS.

(a) MS. has this in a PS. (b) MS. has 'companion'. (c) MS. has 'Mary W. G.'

² Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 178. (d) The date is given as 29th in the original Journal, the word December being omitted, but on the marriage certificate the date is 30th.

This cryptic reference is explained on turning to the last page of the diary, volume xviii, where there is written:

Percy Bysshe Shelley, married to Mary
Wollstonecraft Godwin at St. Mildred's Church,
Bread Street, December 30th, 1816.

Haydon, *Curate*

Spire, *Clerk.*

Present—

William Godwin

Mary Jane Godwin

And to his brother Hull, Godwin wrote in February 1817:

. . . My daughter is between nineteen and twenty. The piece of news I have to tell, however, is that I went to church with this tall girl some little time ago to be married. Her husband is the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley of Field Place in the County of Sussex, Baronet. So that, according to the vulgar ideas of the world, she is well married, and I have great hopes the young man will make her a good husband. . . .

Mary and Shelley returned to Bath, intending after Claire's child was born to settle in a new home at Marlow, where they hoped to recapture some of the peace and happiness of Bishopgate. They were not extravagant in their demands; Mary only asked

¹A house with a lawn, near a river or a lake, noble trees or divine mountains—that should be our little mouse-hole to retire to. But never mind this; give me a garden, and *absentia* Claire, and I will thank my love for many favours.

² ^aLondon, December 15,^b 1816.

I have spent a day, my beloved, of somewhat agonizing sensations; such as the contemplation of vice and folly and hard

¹ December 6th, 1816. Quoted above, p. 73.

(a) Across the top of the first page of the original is written, 'Write a long letter, and give me some answer to Hunt's messages. P. B. Shelley.'

(b) '16' must be meant. The figure looks like 5 converted into 6.

² This letter, omitted by Mrs. Marshall, is given by Dowden and Ingpen with omissions. *Shelley and Mary* has it in full and so has the Julian edition (vol. ix, p. 211). Peck restored an important paragraph in his *Shelley*, but

heartedness exceeding all conception must produce. Leigh Hunt has been with me all day and his delicate and tender attentions to me, his kind speeches of you, have sustained me against the weight of the horror of this event.

The children I have not got. I have seen Longdill, who recommends proceeding with the utmost caution and resoluteness. He seems interested. I told him I was under contract of marriage to you; and he said that in such an event all pretences^c to detain the children would cease. Hunt said very delicately that this would be soothing intelligence for^d you.—Yes, my only hope, my darling love, this will be one among the innumerable benefits which you will have bestowed upon me, and which will still be inferior in value to the greatest of benefits—yourself—it is thro^e you that I can entertain without despair the recollection of the horrors of unutterable villainy that led to this dark, dreadful death. I am to hear to-morrow from Desse [the Westbrooks' solicitor] whether or no, I am to engage in a contest for the children.—At least it is consoling to know that ^fif the contest should arise it would have^f its termination in your nominal union with me—that after having blessed me with a life, a world of real happiness, a mere^g form appertaining to you will not be barren of good.

^hIt seems that this poor woman—the most innocent of her abhorred and unnatural family—was driven from her father's house, and descended the steps of prostitution until she lived with a groom of the name of Smith, who deserting her, she killed herself.—There can be no question that the beastly viper, her sister, unable to gain profit from her connexion with me—has secured to herself the fortune of the old man—who is now dying—by the murder of this poor creature.^h Everything tends to prove, however, that beyond the mereⁱ shock of so hideous a catastrophe having fallen on a human being once so nearly connected with me, there would, in any case have been little to regret. Hookham, Longdill—every one, printed it apart from the rest of the letter. I have transcribed it here from a facsimile of what claims to be the original in the Ashley Library (Shelley). The notes refer to omissions and variations that occur in the more generally accessible *Letters*, Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 533 seq. The MS. in the Bodleian Library is a forgery.

(c) 'pretence'. (d) 'to'. (e) 'through'. (f) 'if the contest should arise it would have' omitted. (g) 'form' before 'mere form' crossed out in original. (h) this paragraph down to 'poor creature' omitted. (i) 'mere' omitted.

does *me* full justice;—bears testimony to the upright spirit and liberality of my conduct to her:—there is but one voice in condemnation of the detestable Westbrooks. If they should dare to bring it before Chancery, a scene of such fearful horror would be unfolded as would cover them with scorn and shame.

How is Clare? I do not tell her, but I may tell you how deeply I am interested in her safety. I [need]^j not recommend her to your care. Give her any kind message from me, and calm her spirits as well as you can.

I do not ask you to calm your own.—I am well in health tho'^k somewhat faint and agitated—but the affectionate attentions shown me by Hunt have been sustainers and restoratives more than I can tell. Do you, dearest and best, seek happiness—where it ought to reside in your own pure and perfect bosom: in the thoughts of how dear and how good you are to me—how wise and how extensively beneficial you are now^l perhaps destined to become. Remember my poor babes, Ianthe and Charles. How ^mtender and dear^m a mother they will find in you—Darling William, too!—My eyes overflow with tears. ⁿTo-morrow write a long letter, and give me some answer to Hunt's message.

P. B. SHELLEY.ⁿ

VIII

JANUARY—MARCH 1817



THE birth of Claire's¹ child on January 13th heralded no good fortune. Shelley's hopes that the Chancellor would not hear the Westbrooks' petition were not fulfilled, and the first day of the hearing was fixed for January 24th. Legally it was not the Westbrooks' petition, but the children's, as they appear in it as the plaintiffs, while Mr. and Miss Westbrook, Mr. Higham and Mr. Robert Farthing Beauchamp, Shelley and Sir Timothy

(j) 'need' omitted in original. (k) 'though'. (l) 'now' omitted. (m) Reverse order. (n) 'To-morrow I will write again. Your own affectionate Shelley.' See Note (a).

¹ She was first called Alba from her father's *Albà*, but later called Allegra at his suggestion.

Shelley appear as defendants, and the children 'pray that their persons and fortunes may not be placed in the custody of their father, but under the protection of the Court of Chancery who would appoint suitable persons to act as guardians'.¹

Journal. Friday, January 24th. My little William's birthday. How many changes have occurred during this little year; may the ensuing one be more peaceful, and my William's star be a fortunate one to rule the decision of this day. Alas, I fear it will be put off, and the influence of the star pass away. Read the *Arcadia* and *Amadis*; walk with my sweet babe.

Saturday, January 25th. An unhappy day. I receive bad news and determine to go up to London. Read the *Arcadia* and *Amadis*. Letters from Mrs. Godwin and William.

Shelley had not allowed for the slow processes of the law, and Mary's visit to London lasted about six weeks. Most of the time was spent with the Hunts at Hampstead, and the sympathy which Shelley received from them at this time, together with the intellectual stimulus of the *Examiner's* encouragement, must be taken into account in considering later services to Hunt which made Trelawny declare him to have been 'the dearest friend the poet ever had'. The only other friend that Mary and Shelley made at this time was Horace Smith,² the stockbroker poet, of whom Shelley exclaimed, in astonished delight: 'He writes poetry and pastoral dramas and yet knows

¹ The letters to Harriet, which were 'exhibits' and whose loss Dowden and all biographers of Shelley have regretted, were found in 1923 by Mr. Hotson. His book, *The Lost Letters to Harriet* (published Faber & Faber, 1930), gives these and the other papers relating to the case. See note below, p. 81.

² Horace Smith described Shelley: 'In a short time Shelley was announced, and I beheld a fair, freckled, blue-eyed, light-haired, delicate-looking person, whose countenance was serious and thoughtful; whose stature would have been tall had he carried himself upright; whose earnest voice, though never loud, was somewhat unmusical. Manifest as it was that his pre-occupied mind had no thought to spare for the modish adjustment of his fashionably-made clothes, it was impossible to doubt, even for a moment, that you were gazing upon a *gentleman*; a first impression which subsequent observation never failed to confirm, even in the most exalted acception of the term, as indicating one that is gentle, generous, accomplished, brave.' *James and Horace Smith*, 1899, Arthur H. Beavan.

how to make money and does make it and is still generous! Upon other frequenters of the Cockney School head-quarters Shelley did not make a favourable impression; Lamb, Hazlitt, Severn, and Keats, each seems to have been rubbed up the wrong way. 'Did he ever cut him up at Godwin's table?' Leigh Hunt asked of Hazlitt. But whether Shelley had ever publicly defeated him in argument or not, the older man apparently did not relish arguing until 3 o'clock in the morning about the respective benefits of Republic or Monarchy. And Severn, who accused him later of robbing Keats of 'the means of hope', evidently took in deadly earnest much that Shelley said for the sake of argument.

'I was shocked and disturbed, and breaking in upon his offensive detail, I exclaimed, 'That the fact of the greatest men having been Christians during the Christian period placed the religion far above such low ridicule.' Shelley immediately denied this fact, and we at once began enumerating on our fingers the great men who were Christians and the few who were not.

Lamb seems to have avoided him, for Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt two years later: 'Of Lamb you know my opinion, and you can bear witness to the regret which I felt, when I learned that the calumny of an enemy had deprived me of his society whilst in England.'

And Keats—although their names are linked together in the story of English literature, the author of the second-finest elegy in the language and his *Adonais* were not on the terms of Milton and Edward King or Tennyson and Arthur Hallam. From the first, Keats was on the defensive before Shelley, prejudiced by his own social 'inferiority-complex' and taking refuge in the plea that to associate with him would be detrimental to his poetry. Leigh Hunt tried to bring together his three protégés

¹ See *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp, 1892. Severn was at first apprehensive of Shelley's reference to himself in the preface to *Adonais*, but he made amends to Shelley's memory later, both by word and deed. In his memoirs he says: '... To that preface, indeed, I owe some of my proudest and most valuable associations and friends, including William Ewart Gladstone, who all consider Shelley the only real religious poet of the age.'

in friendly rivalry, and the sonnets on 'The Nile' by Shelley, Keats, and Hamilton Reynolds respectively were the result.

But, if Shelley was not a success in a coterie, he was very popular with the Hunt children, with whom he played like a child and not like a grown-up pretending to be a child. Thornton Hunt, who was seven then, has left a record of his delight in being with Shelley:

¹I went with him rather than with my father, because he walked faster, and talked with me while he walked, instead of being lost in his own thoughts and conversing only at intervals. A love of wandering seemed to possess him in the most literal sense; his rambles appeared to be without design, or any limit but my fatigue; and when I was 'done up', he carried me home in his arms, on his shoulder, or pickback.

At the end of February Mary and Shelley, with Claire (who had come up a few weeks earlier with the babies and Elise, but had lived in separate lodgings), went to Marlow to settle at Albion House 'for ever'.

But their hopes of making a home for Shelley's children were not to be realized, for on March 27th Lord Chancellor Eldon gave judgement against Shelley.

²This is a case in which, as the matter appears to me, the father's principles cannot be misunderstood; in which his conduct, which I cannot but consider as highly immoral, has been established in proof, and established as the effect of those principles; conduct, nevertheless, which he represents to himself and others not as conduct to be considered as immoral, but to be recommended and observed in practice, and as worthy of approbation. . . .

To be condemned for his opinions and because he had acted on them, that Shelley could bear; but apprehension of what would be the children's own fate, that was agonizing. 'He never had the courage to mention their names in my presence, although I had been by his side throughout the business,' said Leigh Hunt.

¹ From *Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1863; quoted in Blunden, *Shelley and Keats as they struck their contemporaries*.

² Dowden, vol. ii, p. 90.

¹They have taken thy brother and sister dear,
 They have made them unfit for thee;
 They have withered the smile and dried the tear
 Which should have been sacred to me. . . .

This hour will in thy memory
 Be a dream of days forgotten long.
 We soon shall dwell by the azure sea
 Of serene and golden Italy. . . .

Knowledge, wise after the event, gives poignancy to the inadequate verses in which Shelley expressed his first grief for the children he had lost and his bright hopes for 'little Will-mouse' in Italy.²

¹ In Mary Shelley's 'Notes to the Poems of 1817' she says: 'No words can express the anguish he felt when his elder children were torn from him. In his first resentment against the Chancellor, on the passing of the decree, he had written a curse, in which there breathes, besides haughty indignation, all the tenderness of a father's love, which could imagine and fondly dwell upon its loss and consequences. . . . [The poem to William and a fragment not quoted here] were not written to exhibit the pangs of distress to the public; they were the spontaneous outbursts of a man who brooded over his wrongs and woes, and was impelled to shed the grace of his genius over the uncontrollable emotions of his heart.'

² For details of the Master's report on a guardian for the children, see Hotson, *Shelley's Lost Letters to Harriet*. Shelley's suggestion of Longdill was refused in favour of the Westbrooks' nominee, Dr. Kendall. But Shelley's objection to Dr. Kendall was upheld; and of the new nominees, the Rev. Jacob Cheesborough of Ulcomb, Kent, proposed by the Westbrooks, and Dr. and Mrs. Hume (friends of the Longdills), proposed by Shelley, the Humes were accepted. They were a young couple with children of their own and would no doubt have been as sympathetic to Shelley as the legal provision of his one visit a month to see the children in their presence allowed. But by an order of the court on January 22nd, 1822, the children were transferred to the custody of the Rev. James Williams and his wife, of Chelsfield in Kent; and after Shelley's death, when the question of providing an allowance for them arose, Ianthe was placed under the guardianship of Mrs. Farthing Beauchamp (Eliza Westbrook) and Charles under the guardianship of Sir Timothy Shelley. Ianthe seems to have been quite happy with her aunt and married Edward Jeffries Esdaile on September 27th, 1837. She died on June 18th, 1876. Charles, with a criminal lack of imagination on the part of Sir Timothy, was sent to school at the age of eight, to the same Sion House Academy, under the same headmaster, Dr. Alexander Greenlaw, where his father had endured

IX

MARCH 1817-MARCH 1818



IN the depths that Shelley's spirit plumbed in this time of tragedy, Mary never failed to follow him with sympathy, and the tribute to her that he paid in the dedication to the *Revolt of Islam* is witness to the firm foundation of their love in a sphere where henceforth nothing trivial could threaten it.

In the light of this new, deeper understanding they were united to disperse the shadows that threatened once again to gather round them; this time on account of the presence of Claire's child in their house. Scandalous rumours as to her paternity were getting about, whose unfairness to himself Shelley would have disregarded but for the harm he feared they might do Mary and William. It was essential that Byron should make some provision for his child, and, as they knew something of him now, they knew that the less delay there should be in arranging it the better. Claire, on her side, was willing enough for Allegra to have the advantages which her father was in a position to give her, but when it came to practical arrangements she left Mary and Shelley to shoulder her responsibilities.¹

Some apprehension, actually unfounded, that the Chancellor might contrive means to take William away from him too, made Shelley anxious to go abroad again, and the necessity of

such misery. The boy was delicate, and in June 1826 we learn from the Shelley-Whitton correspondence he was away from school, lying ill at Field Place. On September 11th Sir Timothy wrote to Whitton, his solicitor: 'Last evening the medical attendant doubted if poor little Charles could survive an hour, but not all night: with attention and care he still exists, it cannot be for long, nor does he suffer by pain, and the great consolation was, he talked of getting downstairs and be better. The next time I write in all human probability that he is called to another, and, I trust, a better world.' On September 14th, 1826, at the age of eleven years, he died. Letter quoted from *Shelley in England*, by Roger Ingpen, 1917, p. 514.

¹ See letters from Shelley to Byron published in *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, Murray, 1922, pp. 52, 57, 66.

taking Allegra to her father inclined him to Italy. Neither he nor Mary would be sorry to leave Albion House, whose gloomy aspect had indeed boded no good. 'This house is very damp,' Mary wrote to Mr. Baxter, 'all the books in the library are mildewed. We must quit it. Italy is uncertain.'¹ But, unfortunately, they had taken the house on a twenty-years lease, and however uncomfortable it might be, and even injurious to Shelley's health, they could not afford to lose money on it, for Godwin's claims, to which Charles Clairmont, already travelling abroad at Shelley's expense, was not backward in adding his own, combined with renewed threats from Harriet's creditors were involving Shelley in financial difficulties again. His habits of open house and his generosity to the poor lace-makers of Marlow did not help matters; even if he had learnt a lesson from his Irish adventures, and now dispensed his charity through a Mrs. Madocks who would investigate the cases, there were still considerable sums paid out to bearers of 'his little billets, written sometimes on the leaf of a book'.²

The following letter from Mr. Baxter shows that Mary's old friend gave practical advice:

³Dear Sir,—I have forwarded the truss as above by this days Waggon. I have done the best I could in laying out the money you allotted to mitigate the sufferings of your poor neighbours in Marlow. The Blankets you will see by the inclosed document were bought from Maberley, the Army Taylor, so well known to Cobbett, and are those he furnished to the officers of the British Army serving in the Peninsula—how very different their present destination! I have sent the sheets uncut up—there are 94 yards in each piece, 4 $\frac{1}{3}$ yards will make a sheet which will only require to be run through the middle and sewn together by the selvidge and then hemmed at both ends . . . all this might have got done but I thought the poor people would be glad to do it themselves, or if you were to do it for them, you would do it under the superintendence of

¹ Peck, vol. ii, p. 55.

² Dowden, vol. ii, p. 121 (note).

³ Letter from Boscombe MSS. A. Dowden, vol i, p. 122, only gives the bill which accompanied it. Dec. 29th, 1817.

your Ladies cheaper than I could get it done. . . . I do not like Mandeville so well as Mr. Gs other works. I will not however enlarge on its merits and demerits here. . . .

Early in May Mary went to stay at Skinner Street in order to negotiate for the publication of *Frankenstein*. Shelley accompanied her, and with Peacock they attended the Opera and Ballet, where Shelley's enchantment with the *ballerina*, Mlle Milanie, seems to have been the first step in breaking down his curious earlier prejudice against the theatre—and his still more curious reasons for it. . . . ('the loathsome sight of men personating characters which do not and cannot belong to them. Shelley displeased with what he saw of Kean.' *Journal*, October 13th. 1814.)

Shelley had to return alone to Albion House, as the Hunts were there for 'at least three weeks'; he suggested to Hogg that he should stay with Peacock during that time to be near them.¹

Mary wrote from London:

Skinner Street,

May 29th 1817.

My best Love,

. . . You are now arrived, and I hope safe under covert, with your pretty Willman, whom kiss a million times for me. Saturday I shall kiss him myself. . . .

. . . Yesterday evening Papa supped with Hazlitt at Dr. Wolcott's and I amused myself with reading the third canto of 'Childe Harold'. It made me dreadfully melancholy. The lake, the mountains, and the faces associated with these scenes passed before me. Why is not life a continued moment where hours and days are not counted? But as it is, a succession of events happen; the moment of enjoyment lives only in memory; and when we die, where are we?

'Manfred' is advertised; I long to see it. If the weather is tolerable I shall call in Albemarle Street before I return, and if possible see Murray, and ask a question or two about our faithless Albè, but do not say a word of this, as I may learn nothing or worse. Of course

¹ May 8th, 1817. See Appendix C, where this letter is given in full for the first time. It is of interest as revealing one of Shelley's literary enthusiasms, this time for *The Golden Ass*.

Gifford did not allow this courtly bookseller to purchase *Frankenstein*. I have no hope on that score, but then I have nothing to fear. . . .

... Adieu, dearest. Welcome me with smiles and health,
Your affectionate PECKSIE.

Send Charles' letter. I will not close this letter just yet, that if I feel in better spirits after dinner I may say so.

Goodbye, pretty one. I smile now, and shall smile again when I see you Saturday.

The birth of a daughter, Clara, on September 2nd is recorded characteristically in the Journal.

September 19th. I am confined Tuesday 2nd. Read *Rhoda*, Pastor's *Fireside Missionary*, *Wild Irish Girl*, *The Anaconda*, *Glenarvon*, first volume of Percy's *Northern Antiquities*. Bargain with Lackington concerning *Frankenstein*.

Letter from Albè. An unamiable letter from Godwin about Mrs. Godwin's visits. Mr. Baxter returns to town.

Thursday 5th. Shelley writes his poem; his health declines.

Friday, 19th. Hunts arrive.

Mary's recovery was slow, and she suffered from one of those moods of depression that were a Wollstonecraft legacy to which she was to become increasingly subject. The renewed risk of imprisonment for debt¹ that kept Shelley away from Marlow and the ever-present embarrassment of Claire and Allegra were not calculated to calm overwrought nerves, and the friends who enjoyed the hospitality of the house do not seem to have contributed much to the comfort of its mistress.

September 25, 1817.

... I do not see a great deal of our guests; they rise late and walk all the morning. This is something like a contrary fit of Hunt's, for I meant to walk to-day and said so; but they left me, and I hardly wish to take my first walk by myself; however, I must tomorrow if

¹ Mrs. Marshall is not correct in stating that Mary's fears of his imprisonment were not realized. He was undoubtedly committed to prison some time before Oct. 22nd, as an entry in Whitton's minute-book proves. See Ingpen, *Shelley in England*, p. 523.

he shows the same want of tact. Peacock dines here every day, *uninvited*, to drink his bottle. I have not seen him; he morally disgusts me; and Marianne says that he is very ill-tempered. . . .

Pray, dearest, come back in better health, looking cheerful, and pleased with me and your two pretty babes. Alba is quite well. Tell me what money you took and if you took £1 from my table. . . .

Your own affectionate

MARY.

For a month Shelley had to keep away from Marlow. Mary's letters to him in their ingenuous spontaneity illustrate the many-sidedness of her character better than the rather stiffer 'literary' letters of later periods; here she writes freely to some one with whom she is in perfect intimacy, who she knows will be interested in every detail, whether it is about their visitors, or purchases that she wants made in London (but she does not trust Shelley far with them!), or whether she is being 'business-like' and deciding between going to Italy or the sea, or asking after literature in a PS.

September 26, 1817.

¹You tell me to decide between Italy and the sea . . . ²if Italy would not give you far more pleasure than a settlement on the coast of Kent; if it would, say so, and so be it. Perhaps Alba renders the thought of expense pretty nearly equal whichever way you decide. Do you glow with the thoughts of a clear sky, pure air, and burning sun? You would then enjoy life. For my own part, I shall have tolerable health anywhere, and for pleasure Italy certainly holds forth a charming prospect. But are we rich enough to enjoy ourselves there? . . . ³

September 28, 1817.

¹. . . I took my first walk to-day. What a dreadfully cold place this house is! I was shivering over a fire, and the garden looked cold and dismal; but as soon as I got into the road, I found, to my infinite surprise, that the sun was shining, and the air warm and delightful. ²I wish Willy to be my companion in my future walks; to further

¹ These letters are quoted by Mrs. Marshall, chap. x, pp. 200 seq. Originals are in Bodleian MSS.

(a) Paragraph omitted in Mrs. Marshall. Given in Dowden, vol. ii, p. 143. (b) Omitted in Mrs. Marshall, and passage in brackets omitted in

which plan will you send down, if possible by Monday's coach (and if you go to Longdill's it will be very possible—for you can buy it at the corner of Southampton Buildings and send it to the coach at the Old Bailey)^c a seal-skin fur hat for him? It must be a fashionable round shape, *for a boy*, mention particularly, and have a narrow gold riband that it may be taken in if too large. . . .^b I am just now surrounded by babes. Alba is scratching and crowing, William amusing himself with wrapping a shawl round him, and Miss Clara staring at the fire. . . .

Your affectionate girl,

M. W. S.

What of *Frankenstein*? and your own poem—have you fixed on a name? Give my love to Godwin, when Mrs. Godwin is not by, or you must give it to her, and I do not love her.

^cPerhaps you had better not get William's hat as it may not fit him or please me.

October 5, 1817.

. . . Your babes are very well; but Willy suffers from the cold, and I sadly want some flannel both for him and myself; indeed, the poor little fellow is very susceptible of cold, and suffers a good deal; but Marianne would give too high a price, and I do not like to ask Mrs. Godwin, and *you* are no judge. ^dI do not want welch flannel, but it ought to be thick and good—if you do venture to buy it get 8 yards. Mr. Baxter is a good judge of these things, but I should not like to ask him.^d

Remember, dearest, to bring me a good thick book to write extracts in, *ruled*. I send you a list of some books that I selected from the 'Manuel du libraire', which I think might be useful to me, especially those I have marked under; would you try to get them, or some of them? Bring down also your proofs.

How happy shall I be, my own dear love, to see you again! Your last was so very, very short a visit; and after you were gone, I thought of so many things I had to say to you, and had no time to say. Come Tuesday, dearest, and let us enjoy some of each other's company; come and see your sweet babes and the little Commodore [Allegra]; she is lively and an uncommonly interesting child. I never see her without thinking of the expression in my Mother's Dowden also. (c) Omitted in Mrs. Marshall and Dowden. (d) Omitted in Mrs. Marshall and Dowden.

letters concerning Fanny. If a mother's eyes were not partial, she seemed like this Alba. She mentioned her intelligent eyes and great vivacity; but this is a melancholy subject.

I have written to Hunt; but tell him, over and above, that our piano is in tune, and that I wish he would come down by Monday's coach to play me a few tunes; . . .

In the New Year (1818) the lease of Albion House was disposed of, and Mary and Shelley spent a month in London before leaving for Italy.

Journal, Thursday, February 12th (Mary). Go to the Indian Library and the Panorama of Romé. On Friday, 13th, spend the morning at the British Museum looking at the Elgin marbles. On Saturday, 14th, go to Hunts. Clare and Shelley go to the opera. On Sunday, 15th, Mr. Bransen, Peacock and Hogg dine with us.

Monday, March 9th. Christening the children.¹

These entries in the Journal show that Mary and Shelley did not leave their country this time as exiles, driven out by a 'prejudice which does not permit me to live on equal terms with my fellow beings', as Shelley had written to Godwin from Dover on their way to Switzerland two years before. This time they left friends behind them and felt they were setting out on a quest for health and adventure. A joint letter to Leigh Hunt shows their mood:

Calais, March 13, 1818 [Friday].

²My dear Friend,

After a stormy but very short voyage we have arrived at Calais, and are at this moment on the point of proceeding. We are all very well, and in excellent spirits. Motion has always this effect upon the blood, even when the mind knows that there are causes for dejection.

¹ The baptismal register of St. Giles in the Fields records: '... William and Clara Everina, children of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Esq., and Mary Wollstonecraft his wife, of Great Marlow, co. Bucks. (late of Great Russell Street), the first born January 24, 1816, the second September 21, 1817; also Clara Allegra, reputed daughter of Rt. Hon. George Gordon, Lord Byron, Peer, of no fixed residence, travelling on the Continent, by Clara Mary Jane Clairmont, born January 17, 1817.' The officiating clergyman was Charles Macarthy. Ingpen, *Shelley in England*, p. 529.

² Ingpen, vol. ii, pp. 587 seqq.

^aWith respect to Tailor [*sic*] and Hessey I am ready to certify, if necessary in a Court of Justice, that one of them said he would give up his copyright for the £20; and that in lieu of that he would accept the profits of *Rimini* until it was paid.

Yours ever affectionately,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Pray write to Milan.

(Written by Mary.)

Shelley is full of business, and desires me to finish this hasty notice of our safety. The children are in high spirits and very well. Our passage was stormy but very short. Both Alba and William were sick, but they were very good and slept all the time. We now depart for Italy, with very fine weather and good hopes.

Farewell, my dear Friend, may you be happy.

Your affectionate friend,

MARY W. S.

(a) Shelley had negotiated with Taylor & Hessey, on Hunt's behalf. See Julian edition, Notes, vol. ix, p. 289.

PART 3
ITALY:
THE PARADISE OF EXILES
1818-1820



I

MARCH-JUNE 1818



TRAVELLING *en famille* did not keep Shelley and Mary from reading: although there were with them the children (William and Clara), Claire and Allegra and the two nurses, the Swiss Élise and the Marlow girl Milly, they got through Wieland's French translations of Aristippus; and, in spite of the jolting on roads which might have overturned them at any minute, Shelley managed to read Schlegel aloud and also poems from Hunt's *Foliage*.¹

They arrived at Lyons on March 21st, at half past eleven at night, having been delayed at Macon by a broken spring in the *calèche*. Next day, Mary writes in the Journal:

Sunday, March 22nd (Lyons). A fine pleasant day. We agree with a voiturier to take us to Milan; and then walk out by the side of the river until its confluence with the Saone. We can see from here Jura and Mont Blanc, and the whole scene reminds us of Geneva. After dinner our voiturier comes, and we have a long conversation with him about the state of Lyons, and past events in it. He was here in the revolutionary times. After this we ride out by the river-side, and see the moon rise, broad and red, and behind the Alps. Shelley writes to Lord Byron.

This letter was one of many in which Shelley reported to Byron the progress of the journey across Europe which was to bring his daughter to him. He always takes for granted that Byron must be as affectionate and enthusiastic a father as himself:

²You will find your little Allegra quite well. I think she is the most lovely and engaging child I ever beheld. Tell me what you think of her, and whether or no she equals your expectations.

¹ A full account is given in the Journal quoted in Dowden, chap. v.

² To Byron, April 30th, 1818. In *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, Murray, 1922, vol. ii, p. 76, and in Julian edition, vol. ix, p. 304.

The main incident of the journey was their detention at Pont Beauvoisin, the frontier village of France where, in 1824, Hazlitt was likewise to be detained on his second honeymoon and to write of the event with Shelleyan indignation:¹

¹I had two trunks. One contained books. When it was unlocked, it was as if the lid of Pandora's box flew open. There could not have been a more sudden start or expression of surprise, had it been filled with cartridge-paper or gun-powder. Books were the corrosive sublimate that eat out despotism and priestcraft—the artillery that battered down castle and dungeon-walls—the ferrets that ferreted out abuses—the lynx-eyed guardians that tore off disguises—the scales that weighed right and wrong.

In Shelley's case the guards fell upon the proscribed authors, Voltaire and Rousseau, and would have insisted on detaining the whole library if, with unaccustomed good fortune, there had not happened to be present an English Canon who had met Sir Timothy Shelley at the Duke of Norfolk's; and as this impeccable religious authority vouched for Shelley, the books were allowed to pass.

They pressed on to Milan, arriving there on April 4th, and three days later Shelley and Mary set out alone together to visit Como, where they wanted to take a house for the summer.

Friday, April 10th. In the morning we go out on the lake to look for a house with a person we are recommended to by Signor Marietta. We see a very nice house, but out of repair, with an excellent garden, but full of serpents. On our return from the Villa Lanzi we leave our companion and set out for the Tremezzina. Nothing can be more divine than the shores of this lovely lake. We go to look at the house of a M. Sommariva, and are joined by the master, who makes his apologies that he cannot accompany us in our search. We sleep at an inn here.

Saturday, April 11th. We look at a house beautifully situated, but too small; and afterwards, crossing the lake, at another magnificent one, which we shall be very happy if we obtain. We then return to Como. Nothing can be more divine than the shores—

¹ *A Tour through France and Italy.* Hazlitt's Works, 1903, vol. ix, p. 186.

partly bare, partly overgrown with laurels. We visit a fine waterfall and the Pliniana. The wind is against us, and the lake rather rough. We arrive at Como about five. Shelley has finished the 'Life of Tasso', and reads Dante. Read 'Pamela'. A thunderstorm.

Mary describes the Villa Pliniana in *The Last Man*:¹

Ten miles from Como, under the steep heights of the eastern mountains, by the margin of the lake, was a villa called the Pliniana, from its being built on the site of a fountain, whose periodical ebb and flow is described by the younger Pliny in his letters. . . . Two large halls, hung with splendid tapestry, and paved with marble, opened on each side of a court, of whose two other sides one overlooked the deep dark lake, and the other was bounded by a mountain, from whose stony side gushed, with roar and splash, the celebrated fountain. Above, underwood of myrtle and tufts of odorous plants crowned the rock, while the star-pointing giant cypresses reared themselves in the blue air, and the recesses of the hills were adorned with the luxuriant growth of chesnut-trees.

They returned to Milan and impatiently awaited an answer from Byron to their suggestion that he should come to visit them and take Allegra back with him. While they waited they heard rumours of his way of life in Venice which were very disquieting, and which they felt still less able to discount when at last a letter did arrive (on April 21st) in which he stipulated that, if he took Allegra, it was only on condition that Claire should resign all claim to her and undertake never to try to see her. These terms seemed inhumanly harsh, and Shelley tried to dissuade Claire from parting with Allegra.

But Claire had the stubbornness of all weak natures, and having at last come to a resolution was determined to keep to it.² Her self-sacrifice in making the decision was undeniable, for

¹ *The Last Man*, vol. iii, pp. 266-7, 1826. She reverts to it in *Rambles through Germany and Italy*, vol. i, p. 89.

² Letter from Shelley to Claire: 'Pisa, March 20th 1822. Remember, Claire, when you rejected my earnest advice and checked me with that contempt which I have never merited from you, at Milan, and how vain is now your regret!—This is the second of my Sibylline volumes; if you wait for the third, it may be sold at a still higher price!' Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 947.

whatever her selfishness on other accounts, there could be no doubt that she had been a devoted mother to Allegra; indeed, it was her obvious affection which had given rise to doubts in the minds of neighbours at Marlow whom they had hoped to persuade that Allegra was the child of London friends sent into the country for her health. Although she had determined to make the initial sacrifice, she refused to face the full implication of it, preferring to rely on the good nature and ready sympathy of Shelley. She had assessed these well enough to know that they would always be at her service in trying to modify Byron's decrees.

Mary, sympathetic towards a mother's anxiety which she could so well understand, arranged that the Swiss nurse, Élise, should not only take Allegra but also stay with her; and on April 28th, the day after her mother's twentieth birthday, Allegra was sent to Venice. Three days later, with Shelley's usual faith in the panacea of travel, they set out for Leghorn.

It was on the way there through Parma, Modena, Bologna, and Pisa that Shelley first saw

. . . the line
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
In the south dimly islanded;¹

and composed the earliest of his poems round the hills' magic name:

Listen, listen, Mary mine,
To the whisper of the Apennine,
It bursts on the roof like the thunder's roar,
Or like the sea on a northern shore,
Heard in its raging ebb and flow
By the captives pent in the cave below. . . .²

Their first impressions of Leghorn, where they arrived on May 9th, were not favourable—'a stupid town'—but the real object in visiting it was to make the acquaintance of Maria

¹ From 'Lines written among the Euganean Hills'.

² From a fragment called 'Passage of the Apennines'.

Gisborne, who lived there with her husband and her son Henry Reveley; and for her sake they stayed a month—'the sole attraction in this most unattractive of cities'.¹

Mary wrote to her father describing his old friend, and in answer received an unusually warm reply:

2. . . I received last Friday a delightful letter from you. I was extremely gratified by your account of Mrs. Gisborne. I have not seen her, I believe, these twenty years; I think not since she was Mrs. Gisborne; and yet by your description she is still a delightful woman. How inexpressibly pleasing it is to call back the recollection of years long past, and especially when the recollection belongs to a person in whom one deeply interested oneself, as I did in Mrs. Reveley. I can hardly hope for so great a pleasure as it would be to me to see her again.

At the end of May Shelley went ahead to the Bagni di Lucca, to look for a house, and Mary and Claire joined him there on June 11th.

Mary's letters to Mrs. Gisborne show the life they led during the two months they spent there:

It is strange . . . after having been accustomed for a month to the tumult of the Via Grande, to come to this quiet scene, where we

¹ Perhaps from prejudice that he should have been a successful rival to Godwin in Maria's affections, Mary and Shelley did not at first like Mr. Gisborne, but in the end his sterling qualities prevailed, and, however little they were willing to admit it, the event proved that Maria's sound instinct had not failed her in her choice.

'Mrs. Gisborne', Shelley wrote to Peacock, on Aug. 22nd, 1819, 'is a sufficiently amiable and very accomplished woman; she is ἀμικροκτικὴ and αἰσθη, how far she may be φιλοανθρωπική I don't know, for she is the antipodes of enthusiasm. Her husband, a man with little thin lips, receding forehead, and a prodigious nose, is an excessive bore. His nose is something quite Slawkenbergian—it weighs on the imagination to look at it. It is that sort of nose which transforms all the "g's" its wearer utters into "k's". It is a nose once seen never to be forgotten, and which requires the utmost stretch of Christian charity to forgive. I, you know, have a little turn-up nose; Hogg has a large hook one; but add them both together, square them, cube them, you will have but a faint idea of the nose to which I refer.'

(a) Shelley's Greek was usually accentless; cp. note (a), p. 65.

² Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 215.

'hear no sound except the rushing of the river in the valley below. While at Livorno, I hardly heard the noise; but when I came here, I felt the silence as a return to something very delightful from which I had been long absent. We live here in the midst of a beautiful scene, and I wish that I had the imagination and expressions of a poet to describe it as it deserves, and to fill you all with an ardent desire to visit it. . . .

. . . We have a small garden, and at the end of it is an arbour of laurel trees, so thick that the sun does not penetrate it; nor has my prediction followed us, that we should everywhere find it cold. Although not hot, the weather has been very pleasant. We see the fire-flies in an evening, somewhat dimmed by the bright rays of the moon.

They ride every evening:

. . . when we set out at sunset and are lighted home by Venus, Jupiter and Diana, who kindly lend us their light after the sleepy Apollo is gone to bed. The road which we frequent is raised somewhat above, and overlooks the river affording some very fine points of view amongst these woody mountains.

Still, we know no one; we speak to one or two people at the Casino, and that is all; we live in our studious way, going on with Tasso, whom I like, but who, now I have read more than half his poem, I do not know that I like half so well as Ariosto. . . .

Shelley, not stirred by any strong creative impulse, translated the *Symposium* to 'give Mary some idea of the manners and feelings of the Athenians, so different on many subjects from that of any other community that ever existed', and finished, at her request, the 'eclogue' of *Rosalind and Helen* begun at Marlow; Mary watched for the reviews of *Frankenstein* and considered to what she should turn her attention next: a play about Charles I or about Beatrice Cenci, whose story Shelley had found in manuscript form at Leghorn and was anxious for her to undertake ('Shakspeare was only a human being'¹), or biographies of the Commonwealth men, which was Godwin's suggestion. The theme of the one was beyond her powers and

¹ Shelley in a letter to Mary, Padua, Sept. 22nd, 1818. Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 626.

she had not access to a good library for the other; but the symptoms of *cacoethes scribendi* were not acute, and she was content in happy tranquillity to read, to study Italian and Latin, and, best of all, to watch Shelley's health improve in the genial climate.

II

AUGUST-NOVEMBER 1818



ON August 17th Mary invited the Gisbornes to come and stay with her, as Shelley and Claire had gone to Venice on 'important business'. This meant that Claire had induced Shelley to visit Byron and intercede with him for her to see Allegra. The child was no longer with her father, but with Mrs. Hoppner, the Swiss wife of the British Consul.¹ Although this was contrary to Byron's undertaking that she should be with one or other of her parents until the age of seven, it was undoubtedly much better for her to be in the care of Mrs. Hoppner, who had a little boy of her own, and though somewhat scatter-brained was an amiable and homely woman.

They were delayed at Florence by passport difficulties with the Austrian authorities, and Shelley wrote that Claire had decided to wait there or at Padua in order not to irritate Byron. But three days later, from Venice, he wrote again that she had

¹ Belgrave Hoppner was the second son of John Hoppner, R.A. The following is taken from a MS. in the British Museum (Add. 38510) relating to the family:

'He used to declare that any fool could learn a language in six weeks. . . . After his retirement he settled with his wife at Versailles and upon her death went to Turin where he died. His wife was a Mdle Isabelle May and they had one son and one daughter.' Shelley described Mrs. Hoppner: she 'has hazel eyes and sweet looks—rather Maryish', and 'so good, so beautiful, so angelically mild, that were she as wise too, she would be quite a Mary; but she is not very accomplished. Her eyes are like a reflection of yours. Her manners are like yours when you know and like a person.' A letter from Mrs. Hoppner to Mary about Allegra is quoted in full for the first time in Appendix C.

come on with him after all and was staying at the Hoppners' in secret:

Clare changed her plan of remaining at Padua, partly from the badness of the beds, which indeed are full of those insects, inexpressible by Italian delicacy, and partly from the strangeness and solitude of the place.

After an interview in which Byron beat about the bush and insisted on taking the distracted and impatient Shelley in his gondola to ride on the Lido sands,¹ he agreed to allow Allegra to visit her mother at Este, where he would put his villa, 'I Cappucini', at the disposal of the Shelleys. At five o'clock in the morning Shelley wrote to Mary:

... Pray come instantly to Este, where I shall be waiting in the utmost anxiety for your arrival. You can pack up directly you get this letter, and employ the next day on that. The day after, get up at four o'clock, and go post to Lucca, where you will arrive at six. ...
[... Dearest love, be well, be happy, come to me—confide in your own constant and affectionate

P. B. S.

✓ Kiss the blue-eyed darlings for me, and do not let William forget me. Ca cannot recollect me.

When she received this letter, Mary had just welcomed the Gisbornes, but, with their concurrence, decided that she must obey Shelley's urgent summons and prepared to start off at once, although the baby, Clara, was not well. Delayed, as Shelley had been, at Florence for a whole day, her journey was extremely uncomfortable, and when she arrived at Este, on September 5th, Clara was dangerously ill. Shelley also was suffering from poisoning from some cakes he had eaten, and he and Claire went into Padua to consult the doctor there. As they did not think much of him, it was decided to take Clara to Venice, where she might have better attention. Shelley went ahead on the 22nd, but returned to Padua on the next day to meet Mary. The rest of the journey was a nightmare: the child

¹ The occasion of 'Julian and Maddalo'.

grew worse each minute, and everything seemed to combine to frustrate their progress. At Fusina the soldiers on duty attempted to prevent their crossing, as they had forgotten their passports, 'but they could not resist Shelley's impetuosity at such a moment'.¹ The gondola which was to take them to the Inn moved with exasperating slowness. Arrived at last, Shelley went off to find Doctor Alietti, but before he could bring him back Mary by herself had watched in agony the grey pall of death creep over her child's face and felt the little body stiffen in her arms.

By seven o'clock in the evening, at the age of one year and three weeks, Clara Everina had died. The next day (September 25th) her body was buried on the Lido.²

Mary's self-training in fortitude and equanimity stood her in good stead now. There is no indulgence in a luxury of grief in the entries of the Journal, nor are there any of the sentimental reflections of three years earlier, when the first baby did not survive. Mary was learning grief 'too deep for tears'. As if ashamed of her first outbreak of despair when she had realized there was no hope, she forced herself to go about Venice with the Hoppners, and even brought herself to plead with Byron for an extension of Allegra's holiday at Este.

Saturday, September 26th. An idle day. Go to the Lido and see Albè there.

Sunday, September 27th. Read fourth canto of *Child Harold*. It rains. Go to the Doge's palace, Ponte dei Sospiri, &c. Go to the Academy with Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner, and see some fine pictures. Call at Lord Byron's and see the Fornarina.³

¹ Shelley once said to Trelawny, 'I always go on until I am stopped and I never am stopped.'

² In her poem, 'The Choice', written soon after Shelley's death (see Appendix D), Mary speaks of this sorrow:

A happy Mother first I saw this sun,
Beneath this sky my race of joy was run,
First my sweet girl, whose face resembled his,
Slept on bleak Lido, near Venetian seas.

³ Byron's mistress, the baker's wife. Cp. reference in Mrs. Hoppner's letter, Appendix C.

Monday, September 28th. Go with Mrs. Hoppner and Cavaliere Mengaldo to the Library. Shopping. In the evening Lord Byron calls.

Tuesday, September 29th. Leave Venice and arrive at Este at night, Claire is gone with the children (William and Allegra) to Padua.

In *Valperga* Mary was to describe Este later:

(It) is situated nearly at the foot of the Euganean hills, on a declivity overlooked by an extensive and picturesque castle, beyond which is a convent; the hills rise from behind, from whose heights you discover the vast plain of Lombardy, bounded to the west by the far Apennines of Bologna, and to the east by the sea and the towers of Venice.

Spent in this wealth of natural beauty, the days brought a healing peace in their quiet train; Shelley writing 'Julian and Maddalo' and beginning *Prometheus Unbound* and some part of the *Euganean Hills*, while Mary transcribed *Mazeppa*¹ for Byron and read Shakespeare and Italian lives of Alfieri and Tasso.

On October 12th Mary and Shelley, with William and Élise, who had now returned to them, visited Venice again and saw a side of Byron's life that disgusted them and filled them with regret that Claire should ever have parted with Allegra. As Shelley wrote to Peacock later:

²He associates with wretches who seem almost to have lost the gait and physiognomy of man, and who do not scruple to avow practices which are not only not named, but I believe seldom even conceived in England. He says he disapproves, but he endures. He is heartily and deeply discontented with himself; and contemplating

¹ Oct. 3rd, 1818. 'I take advantage of an opportunity of a person going to Venice to send you "Mazeppa" and your ode with I hope not many errors, and those partly from my not being able to decypher your MS.' She offers to copy *Don Juan*: '... You will see by my copying "Mazeppa" so quickly that there is more of pleasure than labour in my task. Allegra is perfectly well. M. W. S.' From an unpublished letter in possession of Sir John Murray.

² Dec. 22nd, 1818. Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 651.

in the distorted mirror of his own thoughts the nature and the destiny of man, what can he behold but objects of contempt and despair? But that he is a great poet, I think the Address to Ocean proves. And he has a certain degree of candour while you talk to him, but unfortunately it does not outlast your departure.

But there was no help for it now, and by November 5th the child had been restored to her father's 'care'. With heavy hearts Shelley and Mary put Venice and the memories of the Lido behind them and turned southward to Rome.

III

NOVEMBER 1818-JUNE 1819

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<sup>1</sup>*Friday, November 20th.* We travel all day the Campagna di Roma—a perfect solitude, yet picturesque, and relieved by shady dells. We see an immense hawk sailing in the air for prey. Enter Rome. A rainy evening. Doganas and cheating inn keepers. We at length get settled in a comfortable hotel.

There may be 'the murmur of a prophecy' for those who have ears to hear these things in the bird of prey that Mary and Shelley saw hovering before them as they came into Rome, as there was to be in Byron's warning,

if you can't swim,

Beware of Providence.<sup>2</sup>

or in the vision at Lerici of Allegra calling from the sea. Signs and portents are not wanting to the superstitious, but like the cries of 'Cenci, Cenci' that led Shelley to the ruins of Beatrice's home as he strode about the streets with her story in his mind, they may turn out to be nothing but the equivalent of 'Rags and Bones, Rags and Bones'.

<sup>1</sup> For details of the journey see Shelley's letters to Peacock. Ingpen, vol. ii, pp. 631 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> From 'Julian and Maddalo', 117-18, 1818.

One week was all that the travellers devoted now to Rome, but it was a full one.

<sup>1</sup>The Vatican, St. Peter's, . . . the Forum . . . the Coliseum is unlike any work of human hands I ever saw before. . . .

. . . The temples of Jupiter, and Concord, and Peace, and the Sun, and the Moon, and Vesta, are all within a short distance of this spot. . . .

. . . The English burying-place is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tomb of Cestius, and is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld. To see the sun shining on its bright grass, fresh, when we first visited it, with the autumnal dews, and hear the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep. . . .

The descriptions that Shelley wrote to Peacock gave a content to his letters that raises them far above the stilted moralizings of his Godwin period; they show how much his development owed to the 'diet of Antiquity'. On November 27th he went ahead to Naples, and, four days later, Mary and Claire with little William, Elise,<sup>2</sup> and Paolo joined them. The winter here passed in outward uneventfulness, but Shelley's health suffered from the climate and was not improved by a physician who treated him for liver trouble; nor was the loneliness of their surroundings really good for them.<sup>3</sup> Both Shelley and Mary needed the stimulation of congenial society, although the habit of the 'romantic idiom' made them praise the joys of solitude, and the emotion that Mary had driven underground after the death of Clara was the source of recurrent fits of

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Peacock, Naples, Dec. 22nd, 1818. Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 651.

<sup>2</sup> Elise was already a mother when she entered the Shelleys' service, but during this stay at Naples they discovered that she and Paolo had been living together and were expecting a child. They were persuaded to marry and both left the Shelleys. The matter is important for its bearing on the lying reports that the two servants later gave to the Hoppners about the Shelley household, see p. 121, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Mary Shelley's Notes on Poems of 1818.

dejection. She was often, she feared, 'a very ordinary sort' of person according to her father's standard. He had written to her:

27th October 1818.

My dear Mary—I sincerely sympathise with you in the affliction which forms the subject of your letter, and which I may consider as the first severe trial of your constancy and the firmness of your temper that has occurred to you in the course of your life; you should, however, recollect that it is only persons of a very ordinary sort, and of a pusillanimous disposition, that sink long under a calamity of this nature. We seldom indulge long in depression and mourning except when we think secretly that there is something very refined in it, and that it does us honour.

Their departure from Naples was probably delayed by some influence of *mañana* in the atmosphere, but also by the great pleasure they found in the expeditions they could make to places of interest around. 'You do not know how delicate the imagination becomes by dieting with antiquity day after day', Shelley wrote to Peacock. Baiae, Vesuvius and Pompeii, Paestum, each contributed to the inspiration of *Prometheus Unbound*, and the memory of them furnished Mary years afterwards with the setting for the opening chapters of *The Last Man*. At the time she was not writing, but, as it were, healing the wounds of her spirit in the same refreshing stream of antiquity that was thrilling Shelley; from her own grief, she had won at this time a wealth of compassion that enabled her to make generous gifts of understanding to Claire, and no trace of resentment at her continued presence with them shows in the Journal.

That their apprehensions for Allegra had been all too well founded, a letter from Mrs. Hoppner to Mary clearly showed.<sup>1</sup> She gave no reassuring news, either of the child's development or her father's way of life. Allegra suffers extraordinarily from the cold, her hands and feet 'like pieces of ice and always red

<sup>1</sup> This letter is here quoted in full for the first time, Appendix C. Boscombe MSS. A. Dowden gives extracts, vol. ii, p. 328.

as blood'; nor is she as forward in speaking as the Hoppners' own child who is younger. It is difficult for her to be taken often to see Byron, as he does not get up until 3 o'clock and that is too late for her; La Fornarina gives her cakes and makes her sick. Mrs. Hoppner does everything in her power to make her happy while she is in her charge, for she fears that the child is doomed always to live with strangers; her father will never restore her to her mother.

Unhappy news, as if the 'bluff little Commodore' that they loved at Marlow were withering in an atmosphere unwarmed by genuine affection; circumstances that recalled only too bitterly to their father the fate of those other two children in the care of strangers. In a letter to Peacock (January 26th) he shows that he is always mindful of them: 'we have reports here of a change in the ministry—to what does it amount? for, besides my national interest in it, I am on the watch to vindicate my most sacred rights, invaded by the Chancery court.'

On March 5th Mary and Shelley with William and Claire entered Rome once more, this time from Albano.

<sup>1</sup>. . . Arches after arches in unending lines stretching across the uninhabited wilderness, the blue defined line of the mountains seen between them; masses of nameless ruin standing like rocks out of the plain; and the plain itself, with its billowy and unequal surface, announced the neighbourhood of Rome.

They set about sight-seeing vigorously, and engaged also a drawing-master for Mary and a singing-master for Claire.<sup>2</sup>

*Tuesday, March 9th.* Shelley and I go to the Villa Borghese. Drive about Rome. Visit the Pantheon. Visit it again by moonlight, and see the yellow rays fall through the roof upon the floor of the temple. Visit the Colliseum.

*Wednesday, March 10th.* Visit the Capitol, and see the most divine statues. Lord Guilford calls.

*Wednesday, March 24th.* Drawing-master. Read Livy and

<sup>1</sup> To Peacock, Rome, March 23rd, 1819. Ingpen, vol. ii, pp. 676 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Corri, who likened Claire's voice to a string of pearls.

Montaigne. Shelley reads Euripides. Visit the Vatican. See the pictures of Raphael.

*Tuesday, March 30th.* Draw all day. Ride to the Borghese Gardens. Shelley goes to hear the 'Miserere'. In the evening Shelley reads Plutarch's 'Life of Marius'.

*Thursday, April 1st.* Walk to the Capitol. Go to the Vatican with Shelley and Willmouse. Read *Romeo and Juliet*. Shelley reads the *Hippolytus* of Euripides.

'Willmouse' at three years old was seldom apart from his devoted parents,

that fair blue-eyed child,  
Who was the lodestar of your life.<sup>1</sup>

Rome suited Shelley's health, and visits from Lord Guilford and Sir William Drummond<sup>2</sup> opened the way to a more social life that promised to make their stay enjoyable. Besides other English residents who called on them, they received invitations to some Italian houses, notably to that of Signora Dionigi, the distinguished antiquary, whom Mary described later to Mrs. Gisborne as 'very old, very miserly and very mean, but a centre of intellectual culture in Rome and able to gather many strangers to her conversazioni'.

*Sunday, March 28th.* (*Claire's Journal*.)<sup>3</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Bell call. Walk with S[helley] to the Capitol and the Coliseum. It is a most bright and beautiful day. Drive in the Borghese Gardens, and sit on the steps of the divine temple of Æsculapius the Saviour. I see many priests walking about it. In the evening, go to the conversazione of the Signora Marianna Dionigi, where there is a cardinal, and many unfortunate Englishmen, who, after having crossed their legs and said nothing the whole evening, rose all up at once, made their bows and filed off.

But it was towards the end of April, when they were driving in

<sup>1</sup> Beatrice Cenci to Cardinal Camillo. *The Cenci*, v. ii. 49-50.

<sup>2</sup> Drummond's *Academical Questions* was mentioned by Shelley in a note to the Preface of the *Revolt of Islam*; he called it 'a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism'. He was British Minister at Naples at this time, and had undertaken excavations at Herculaneum.

<sup>3</sup> Dowden, vol. ii, p. 258.

the Borghese gardens, that they met the lady whose friendship was to be the most significant for them—Amelia Curran, daughter of the Irish Reformer. An amateur artist herself, she encouraged Mary in her drawing and also persuaded each of the Shelleys and Claire to sit for her; the likeness of Shelley was pronounced at the time to be very poor,<sup>1</sup> but that of William excellent.

The pleasure of Miss Curran's company and their interest in her portraits made them postpone their departure from Rome, in spite of their fears that Shelley's health might be endangered by a Roman summer. Their first intention of going to Leghorn to join the Gisbornes had been abandoned on account of William. 'We should like of all things to have a house near you by the seaside at Livorno, but the heat would frighten me for William, who is so very delicate that we must take the greatest possible care of him this summer'; and another suggestion, Naples, was also discarded when it was found that the physician whose attendance Mary would need for her confinement in the autumn would be travelling with the Princess Borghese in the Pisa district.

The Bagni di Lucca were therefore decided upon, and June 7th fixed for the day of departure, but on June 2nd William fell ill. He had not been well the week before (May 25th), but had recovered sufficiently for his mother to write to Mrs. Gisborne about houses at the Baths with no apprehension of the necessity for leaving Rome quickly.

The child was attended by Doctor Bell, but there was very little hope for him from the first moment of the attack; his father watched by his bedside without ceasing, and Claire, a devoted nurse, did all in her power to spare Mary, on whose health another child's life was now dependent.

Claire wrote to Mrs. Gisborne on June 3rd to tell her of

<sup>1</sup> This is, however, the sketch from which all subsequent portraits were made, with the exception of the hitherto unpublished sketch by West facing p. 156. The portrait of Mary was given into Trelawny's care and never restored to Mary, see p. 251. The portraits of William and Claire are also lost.

their postponed departure, and two days later Mary scribbled at the bottom of the letter:

5th June 1819.

<sup>1</sup>William is in the greatest danger. We do not quite despair, yet we have the least possible reason to hope. <sup>a</sup>Yesterday he was in the convulsions of death and he was saved from them—yet we dare not, must not hope.<sup>a</sup>

I will write as soon as any change takes place. The misery of these hours is beyond calculating. The hopes of my life are bound up in him.

—Ever yours affectionately,

M. W. S.

I am well, and so is Shelley, although he is more exhausted by watching than I am. William is in a high fever.

At noonday on June 7th, William Shelley died. His father wrote to Peacock:

Rome, June 8th, 1819.

<sup>2</sup>My dear Friend,

Yesterday, after an illness of only a few days, my little William died. There was no hope from the moment of the attack. You will be kind enough to tell all my friends, so that I need not write to them. It is a great exertion to me to write this, and it seems to me as if, hunted by calamity as I have been, that I should never recover any cheerfulness again.

If the things Mary desired to be sent to Naples have not been shipped, send them to Livorno.

We leave this city for Livorno to-morrow morning, where we have written to take lodgings for a month. I will then write again.

Yours ever affectionately,

P. B. SHELLEY.

<sup>1</sup> The first part of this letter has been generally attributed to Miss Curran (Dowden, vol. ii, p. 267; Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 242). On the original (Bodleian MSS.) there is no signature, but the initials C. C. are on the outside. (a) omitted in Mrs. Marshall.

<sup>2</sup> Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 691. The original of this letter is in the Boscombe MSS. A. 'This was given me by Mr. Peacock on my expressing a desire to have an autograph of Shelley. J. G. Arnold.' Arnold was Prudentia Hogg's first husband.

## IV

JUNE 1819



Thy little footsteps on the sands  
 Of a remote and lonely shore;  
 The twinkling of thine infant hands,  
 Where now the worm will feed no more;  
 Thy mingled look of love and glee  
 When we returned to gaze on thee . . . .

The unfinished lines, left as if he had not the heart to take them up again, speak simply and poignantly of Shelley's grief at the death of the beloved child for whom his hopes had been so high. To Mary the loss of William was a stroke that withered her youth; she wrote in the 1816 Journal, 'Begun July 21st, Ended with my happiness June 7, 1819'; and indeed it seemed that at twenty-four she had outlived even her own mother's experience and could echo Shelley's words, 'If I die now, I have lived to be older than my father, I am ninety years of age.' But whereas Shelley was learning the lessons of age without losing his ardour and integrity, Mary felt that for herself the brightness of youth was fading and in its place was coming as yet no glimmer of light from the 'unhoped serene' of age ahead.

My dearest Mary, wherefore hast thou gone,  
 And left me in this dreary world alone?  
 Thy form is here indeed—a lovely one—  
 But thou art fled, gone down the dreary road,  
 That leads to Sorrow's most obscure abode;  
 Thou sittest on the hearth of pale despair,  
 Where  
 For thine own sake I cannot follow thee.

Her constitutional melancholy<sup>3</sup> did not help her to rouse

<sup>1</sup> From Poems written in 1819.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Leigh Hunt to Mary, July 1819: '... Not that I wonder at it

herself now from her torpor of despair, either to admit Shelley to her confidence or to look forward to the birth of the child she was expecting. Puzzled and disturbed, Shelley saw her unapproachable in a grief that should have brought them even closer to each other. In another fragment he wrote:

The world is dreary,  
And I am weary  
Of wandering on without thee, Mary;  
A joy was erewhile  
In thy voice and thy smile,  
And 'tis gone, when I should be gone too, Mary.

That sorrow cannot move always on the plane of tragedy is a tragedy of human nature. Reaction, repression, inhibition, we may call the suppressed emotions by whatever name is newest: the old fact remains that, in grief as in physical illness, the sufferer, when the wound is healing or the crisis over, passes into an uneasy convalescence in which the courage summoned to face pain and risk is dismissed to fritter itself away in complaint and irritability. Godwin was wise when he wrote to his daughter, in a letter which, elsewhere, might well have let humanity break in,

<sup>1</sup>... Remember too, though at first your nearest connections may pity you in this state, yet that when they see you fixed in selfishness and ill humour, and regardless of the happiness of every one else, they will finally cease to love you, and scarcely learn to endure you....

Mary took refuge in her grief because her nervous system, sustaining such a shock as this when she was in a state of health peculiarly liable to hysteria and already strained by the control over her emotions exerted after the death of Clara, was not

under such sufferings; but I know, at least, I have often suspected, that you have a tendency, partly constitutional perhaps, and partly owing to the turn of your philosophy, to look over-intensely at the dark side of human things; and they must present double dreariness through such tears as you are now shedding....<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Sept. 9th, 1819. Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 254.

capable of bearing with equanimity the petty annoyances of everyday life.

<sup>1</sup>Heigh ho, the Claire and the Maie  
Find something to fight about every day . . .

records Claire in her Journal, but she did not take the shortest way to ending the situation.

It is not to be wondered at that Mary, unable to have her husband to herself and unfit to bear Claire's moods with patience, sought distraction with acquaintances who would make no demands upon her and would take her mind off her cares. 'She can't bear solitude, nor I society,' said Shelley later to Trelawny, but Mary's search for distraction was only superficial and could easily have been relinquished. The necessary condition of contentment, *absentia Claire*, applied in Italy as much as it had in a Thames-side house in England. . . . <sup>2</sup>'I long most eagerly for some sea-girt isle where, with Shelley, my babe, and books and horses, we may give the rest to the winds.'

In her first extremity of grief Mary put up obstacles to sympathy that laid the foundation of misunderstandings that she was never to have the opportunity wholly to resolve. Only a year after the birth of Percy Florence, when she was 'beginning to look a little consoled', there came the Emilia Viviani incident; she showed great fortitude in facing this, but a year later its after-effects and the strain of another pregnancy told on her, so that in the last days at Lerici she showed a morbid sensitiveness to the savagery of their surroundings and a disinclination to install Jane Williams where she had just got rid of Claire that might have seemed unreasonable and petty to any one ignorant of the background.<sup>3</sup> But in happy motherhood and

<sup>1</sup> July 4th, 1820. Dowden, ii. 331.

<sup>2</sup> To Mrs. Gisborne, March 7th, 1822. Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 329. Cp. Shelley to Mary, Aug. 16th, 1821: 'My greatest content would be utterly to desert all human society, I would retire with you and our child to a solitary island in the sea, would build a boat and shut upon my retreat the floodgates of the world. I would read no reviews and talk with no authors.'

<sup>3</sup> Cp. Trelawny's criticisms in the *Records and Recollections*.

with a household, if not a 'sea-girt isle', free from strangers, worry, and ill health, Mary would have brought again to the surface that perfect companionship and sympathy that, deep down, united her and Shelley. If her withdrawal into herself at the time of their common grief and her subsequent moods of dejection made him think, momentarily, that he could find in other women the Antigone of an ideal love,<sup>1</sup> he never really let go of that Friend,

whose presence on my wintry heart  
Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain.<sup>2</sup>

The love that was born so radiantly in their youth and flowered so tenderly in their parenthood was not to be killed at a blow, nor slowly extinguished by the pressure of adverse superficial circumstances. They might be no longer the Pecksie and the Elfin Knight to each other; perhaps Mary as a woman may have wished they were, but in a deeper sense the lines of 1815 remained true,

... And I return to thee, mine own heart's home.<sup>3</sup>

## V

JUNE-NOVEMBER 1819



FOUR days after William's death Mary and Shelley left for Leghorn in order to be near the Gisbornes. Courageously they set themselves to read and to sight-see, although Mary had no heart for keeping her Journal, and the following extract is from Claire's:

<sup>4</sup>*Monday, June 7th*, at noonday.<sup>a</sup> *Thursday, June 10th*, set out from Rome for Livorno. We visit the waterfall of Terni once again.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to John Gisborne, Oct. 22nd, 1821: 'Some of us have, in a prior existence, been in love with an Antigone, and that makes us find no full content in any mortal tie.' Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 921.

<sup>2</sup> *Revolt of Islam*, Dedication, ll. 55-6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* l. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Dowden, ii. 269.

<sup>a</sup> William's death.

We see also the Lake of Trasimene, now called the Lake of Perugia. Arrive at Livorno—'Aquila Nera'—

*Thursday 17th.* Stay there a week; see the Gisbornes. Remove to Villetta Valsovano, near Monte Nero. Read Cobbett's *Journal in America*, Birkbeck's *Notes on the Illinois*, *Nightmare Abbey*, and *The Heart of Midlothian* by Walter Scott.

The following letter from Mary to Marianne Hunt gives a picture of their life at Leghorn, coloured as it was by her prevailing melancholy; their only friends are the Gisbornes; they read and study, and for *divertissement* watch the native Italians, to whom they begin, however, to feel more and more attracted.

Leghorn, 28th August 1819.

My dear Marianne—We are very dull at Leghorn, and I can therefore write nothing to amuse you. We live in a little country house at the end of a green lane, surrounded by a *podere*. These *poderi* are just the things Hunt would like. They are like our kitchen-gardens, with the difference only that the beautiful fertility of the country gives them. A large bed of cabbages is very picturesque in England, but here the furrows are alternated with rows of grapes festooned on their supporters, and the hedges are of myrtle, which have just ceased to flower; their flower has the sweetest faint smell in the world, like some delicious spice. Green grassy walks lead you through the vines. The people are always busy, and it is pleasant to see three or four of them transform in one day a bed of Indian corn to one of celery. They work this hot weather in their shirts, or smock-frocks (but their breasts are bare), their brown legs nearly the colour, only with a rich tinge of red in it, of the earth they turn up. They sing, not very melodiously, but very loud, Rossini's music, 'Mi rivedrai, ti rivedro,' and they are accompanied by the cicala, a kind of little beetle, that makes a noise with its tail as loud as Johnny can sing; they live on trees; and three or four together are enough to deafen you. It is to the cicala that Anacreon has addressed an ode which they call 'To a Grasshopper' in the English translation.

Well, here we live. I never am in good spirits—often in very bad; and Hunt's portrait has already seen me shed so many tears that, if it had his heart as well as his eyes, he would weep too in pity.

But no more of this, or a tear will come now, and there is no use for that. . . .

. . . I write in the morning, read Latin till 2, when we dine; then I read some English book, and two cantos of Dante with Shelley. In the evening our friends the Gisbornes come, so we are not perfectly alone. I like Mrs. Gisborne very much indeed, but her husband is most dreadfully dull; and as he is always with her, we have not so much pleasure in her company as we otherwise should. . . .

The friendship with the Gisbornes<sup>1</sup> was important not only for the sympathy that Maria was able to afford Mary in her time of need but also for her influence on Shelley's literary development. With her he read Spanish as earlier he had read Italian with Mrs. Boinville, and in coming upon the plays of Calderon he felt he had found a new Revelation.

\*Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken.

Calderon was to him now what Godwin had been in his youth and the Greek dramatists, under Peacock's influence, later. Enthusiastic for the drama, he worked hard to finish *The Cenci*, and by the end of August had had two hundred copies struck off by a printer at Leghorn.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There was for some time a coolness between the Shelleys and the Gisbornes on account of Reveley's abortive steamboat scheme, in which Shelley had invested a considerable amount of money. Shelley wrote, March 19th, 1820: 'This steamboat is a sort of Asymptote which seems ever to approach and never to arrive.' See Dowden, vol. ii, pp. 304 seq.

Mary wrote to Mrs. Leigh Hunt: '. . . You must know that all intercourse between the G's & us is broken off—it were long & tedious in a letter to explain but they have behaved so as to pain & disappoint us extremely—that is to say on Mrs. G's account for I do not count the others. And their folly (as is usual in such cases) equals their—what word shall I put—*baseness*—I hardly think the word too strong—however do not mistake it is an affair of pelf—but acting ill on that score that [they] had no write [*sic*] to pretend to uprightness—enough of them. . . .' Dec. 2nd, 1820. Unpublished. British Museum, Add. MSS. 38523, f. 56.

<sup>2</sup> 'On first looking into Chapman's Homer', Keats.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Leigh Hunt, Aug. 15th, 1819: 'I am also on the eve of completing

He had intended to have as frontispiece an engraving of Beatrice's portrait by Guido which Miss Curran obtained for him in Rome, but the cost of reproduction was excessive. To Miss Curran they both wrote frequently: 'Let us hear also', wrote Mary, 'if you please, anything you may have done about the tomb, near which I shall lie one day, and care not, for my own sake, how soon'; and Shelley says, of the portrait of William:

What we owe to you in possessing the Picture, is more than I can express—May I hope that some day will arrive on which it will be possible to find other expressions for it than words!

Let us hear of your health and spirits, and be they better.

Most sincerely yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Could you be kind enough—Mary says—as to send any drawings of simple monumental forms, such as you consider beautiful as well as durable?—I incline to a mere pyramid—

Mary takes up her Journal again on Shelley's birthday:

*Journal, Wednesday, August 4th, 1819.* We have now lived five years together; and if all the events of the five years were blotted out, I might be happy; but to have won and then cruelly to have lost, the associations of four years, is not an accident to which the human mind can bend without much suffering.

Since I left home I have read several books of Livy, Clarissa Harlowe, the Spectator, a few novels, and am now reading the Bible, and Lucan's Pharsalia, and Dante. Shelley is today twenty-seven years of age. Write; read Lucan and the Bible. Shelley writes The Cenci, and reads Plutarch's Lives. The Gisbornes call in the evening. Shelley reads Paradise Lost to me. Read two cantos of the Purgatorio.

To Leigh Hunt, whose heart was always in the right place

another work, totally different from anything you might conjecture that I should write; of a more popular kind; and, if anything of mine could deserve attention, of higher claims.' Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 705. Dowden says it was finished on Aug. 8th and probably printed by Masi, who had printed Eustace's *Classical Tour Through Italy* in 1817.

and who was showing himself a friend in need with his letters from England, Shelley confided:

Mary's spirits continue dreadfully depressed, and I cannot expose her to Godwin in this state. I wrote to this hard-hearted person (the first letter I had written for a year), on account of the terrible state of her mind, and entreated him to try to soothe her in his next letter. The *very* next letter, received yesterday, and addressed to her, called her husband (me) 'a disgraceful and flagrant person'—tried to persuade her that I was under great engagements to give him *more* money (after having given him £4,700), and urged her if she ever wished a connection to continue between him and her to force me to get money for him.

In order that Mary might be near Dr. Bell<sup>1</sup> for her approaching confinement, Shelley went with Charles Clairmont to Florence to find rooms and returned to take Mary there by easy stages on September 27th. They stopped at Pisa for a day and called on Mr. and Mrs. Mason. Mrs. Mason was Lady Mountcashell, daughter of the Lady Kingsborough who had been jealous of her affection for Mary Wollstonecraft when she was governess to the family in Ireland; she had separated from Lord Mountcashell and lived with Mr. Tighe, by whom she had two daughters, Laura and Nerina, under the name of Mason. When Godwin visited her on his visit to Ireland in 1800 he had described her as a

singular character: a democrat and a republican in all their sternness, yet with no ordinary portion either of understanding or good nature. If any of our comic writers were to fall in her company, the infallible consequence would be her being gibbeted in a play. She is uncommonly tall and brawny, with bad teeth, white eyes, and a handsome countenance. She commonly dresses as I have seen Mrs. Fenwick dressed out of poverty, with a grey gown and no linen visible; but

<sup>1</sup> The Italian doctor seems to have been abandoned. On Sept. 27th Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt: 'one of our motives in going to Florence is to have the attendance of Mr. Bell, a famous Scotch surgeon, who will be there . . . I should feel some disquietude in entrusting her to the best of the Italian practitioners.'

with gigantic arms, which she commonly folds, naked and exposed almost up to the shoulders.<sup>1</sup>

But by 1819 she had evidently improved in appearance, while retaining all that blunt and outspoken charm which had characterized her as a young woman, for Claire describes her thus:

<sup>2</sup>She was very tall, of a lofty and calm presence. Her features were regular and delicate; her large blue eyes singularly well set; her complexion of a clear pale, but yet full of life, and giving an idea of health. Her countenance beamed mildly, with the expression of a refined, cultivated, and highly cheerful mind.

And of Mr. Tighe, Claire says:

<sup>3</sup>He was a most accurate and penetrating judge of human nature; he had lived with the hermit and the sage in their refined solitude; he had lived in the world, and had learned that the man bred in the world and living for it has seldom any heart or conscience.

It says much for the personality of both Mr. and Mrs. Mason that, making no secret of their union, they were accepted everywhere, and Mrs. Mason looked up to as an 'unofficial arbiter of manners'. Mrs. Mason's common sense and 'forthrightness' were to stand Mary in good stead later, but for the moment there was no opportunity for their friendship to develop, as rooms had been taken for six months at Florence and it was necessary to go to them.

<sup>1</sup> Dowden gives a characteristic story of her: 'When Hardy was acquitted of treason in 1794, Lady Mountcashell called at his shop to catch sight of so illustrious a lover of freedom, and obtain a pair of shoes fashioned by his republican hands; she called for the shoes herself, but found them shockingly made, pinching and galling her without remorse. "Mr. Hardy," she said, "I am very sorry, but my feet are democratical, and your shoes are aristocratical, and they don't agree at all. Pray have the kindness to put them on the last for me." Hardy thereupon set to work on a second pair, and insisted that these should be a free gift from a democrat cobbler to a democrat countess.'

<sup>2</sup> Dowden, vol. ii, p. 317.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## VI

NOVEMBER 1819—AUGUST 1820



exceptionally cold winter at Florence aggravated the pain which Shelley habitually suffered and spoilt his pleasure excursions, although he appreciated the Galleries and spent considerable time in them. But the weather had no ill effects on Mary, and may even have served to invigorate her, for on November 12th after labour of only two hours she gave birth to a little boy, Percy Florence.<sup>1</sup> The child, wrapped in flannel coats until suitably warm clothes could be sent by the steamer from England, was small, healthy, and pretty. 'You can imagine', Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt, 'that this is a great blessing and a great comfort to me amongst all my misfortunes, present, and to come. . . . Poor Mary begins (for the first time) to look a little consoled.'

On the last day of the year Mary wrote in the Journal:

*Friday, December 31st.* I have not kept my journal all this time. I have little to say all this time except that in the morning of Friday November 13th [*sic*] little Percy Florence was born. We have seen a good deal of Mr. and Mrs. Meadows, Miss Stacey and her party and Louise. I read little else than Madame de Sévigné's letters. Shelley reads St. Luke aloud to us—and to himself the New Testament. Visit the galleries, the Pitti Palace, &c. We now begin a new year—may it be a happier one than the last unhappy one.

At the end of January they decided to leave for Pisa, where the waters were recommended for Shelley and where he could

<sup>1</sup> Baptized by an English clergyman, Mr. Harding, on Jan. 25th, 1820. Unpublished entry. Boscombe MSS. A. (a) Miss Sophia Stacey was a friend of the Mr. Parker who had married Sir Timothy Shelley's sister. She christened Florence as Percy's second name. Shelley's verses 'Thou art fairer' are addressed to her, and he gave her a pocket-book containing 'Good-night', 'Love's Philosophy', and 'Time long past'. For these verses I am indebted to *Shelley and his Friends in Italy*, by Mrs. Angeli. Further quotations from Miss Stacey's diary are given in chap. x.

consult the celebrated physician, Vacca Berlinghieri. The presence of the Masons, with whom they had been in correspondence since the September visit, was also an attraction. The advice in the following letters from Mrs. Mason shows something of that good sense for which she was noted:

<sup>1</sup>My dear Sir — . . . I am very sorry indeed to think that Mr. Godwin's affairs are in such a bad way, and think he would be much happier if he had nothing to do with trade; but I am afraid he would not be comfortable out of England. You who are young do not mind the thousand little wants that men of his age are not habituated to; and I, who have been so many years a vagabond on the face of the earth, have long since forgotten them; but I have seen people of my age much discomposed at the absence of long-accustomed trifles; and though philosophy supports in great matters, it seldom vanquishes the small everydayisms of life. I say this that Mary may not urge her father too much to leave England. It may sound odd, but I can't help thinking that Mrs. Godwin would enjoy a tour in foreign countries more than he would. The physical inferiority of women sometimes teaches them to support or overlook little inconveniences better than men.'

'I am very sorry', she wrote to Mary later, 'to find you still suffer from low spirits. I was in hopes the little boy would have been the best remedy for that. Words of consolation are but empty sounds, for to time alone it belongs to wear out the tears of affliction. However, a woman who gives milk should make every exertion to be cheerful on account of the child she nourishes.'

The reference to Godwin shows that she was aware of the latest trouble in which he was involved—a lawsuit which he brought against his landlord in Skinner Street for claiming arrears of rent over several years.<sup>2</sup> Shelley advised giving up the business and coming abroad, but Godwin, with perverse jocularly, singularly misplaced in the circumstances, would hear nothing of it.

<sup>3</sup>. . . While then I pursue this <sup>a</sup>Herculean task, the inglorious

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> The controversy with the landlord continued until 1822.

<sup>3</sup> From a letter to Mary, Mar. 30th, 1820. Kegan Paul's *Life of Godwin*, vol. ii, p. 271.

(a) The Herculean task was the *Answer to Malthus*.

transactions of the shop below-stairs furnish me with food, clothing, and habitation, and enable me to proceed.

The warning in Mrs. Mason's advice to Mary was brought home to them with unwelcome force when, in August, letters from Godwin so upset Mary that Percy Florence showed signs of a fever similar to that which had proved fatal to Clara. Shelley, no ineffectual angel at such a time, insisted that Godwin's letters should in future not be addressed to his daughter. He had also to state plainly that he had already expended a fortune on Godwin's debts and it had now become an impossibility to give him more. The absence of rancour or ill temper with which he writes is the more remarkable here, considering not only the pain from which Shelley always suffered but also the worry to which he was exposed at this time by a lawsuit with Paolo. The facts of this are obscure, but it would appear that at Naples some child, which afterwards died, had been committed to Shelley's charge without Mary's knowledge, and Paolo was spreading libellous accounts of its parentage and treatment. 'We have had a most infernal business with Paolo whom, however, we have succeeded in crushing',<sup>1</sup> wrote Shelley from the Gisbornes' house at Leghorn, to which he had moved in order to be near his attorney Del Rosso.

It was in Henry Reveley's workshop that Shelley wrote the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*, and at this time, too, that he composed the *Ode to the Skylark*.

<sup>2</sup>It was on a beautiful summer evening, while wandering among the lanes whose myrtle-hedges were the bowers of the fire-flies, that we heard the carolling of the skylark which inspired one of the most beautiful of his poems.

Percy Florence was making good progress, and looking after him now was no more an excuse for idleness than it had been

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately Paolo was later revenged through the slanders that his wife, Elise, repeated to the Hoppners in Venice (see p. 148).

<sup>2</sup> From Mary Shelley's Notes to the Poems of 1820.

a month after his birth, when his mother had written from Florence to Mrs. Gisborne:

<sup>1</sup>... Study I cannot for I have no books and I may not call simple reading study for Papa is continually saying and writing that to read one book without others beside you to which you may refer is mere child's work. But still I hope now to get on with Latin and Spanish. . . .

At Leghorn she was writing *Castruccio* ('a novel, illustrative of the manners of the Middle Ages in Italy, which she has raked out of fifty old books')<sup>2</sup> and working hard to keep up with Shelley in his reading of the Greek Romances, for, as he had written to the Gisbornes: 'It is not our custom, when we can help it, to divide our pleasures.' Under this influence she tried her hand at two classical 'pastorals', *Proserpine* and *Midas*, to which Shelley contributed the lyrics 'Arethusa', the 'Invocation to Ceres', and the 'Hymn to Pan'.<sup>3</sup>

By August the heat had become oppressive at Leghorn ('the weather is too hot for study', records Mary, most exceptionally, in the Journal), and they decided to return to the Pisa district. Here they arrived on August 5th, and settled at Casa Prinni, in the village of San Giuliano, about four miles outside the town.

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished passage from letter to Mrs. Gisborne, Dec. 28th, 1819, of which parts are in Dowden, vol. ii, p. 318. Bodleian MSS.

<sup>2</sup> Shelley to Peacock, November 1820. Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 831. The letter continues: 'I promise myself success from it; and certainly, if what is wholly original will succeed, I shall not be disappointed. . . .'

<sup>3</sup> See *Proserpine* and *Midas*, edited A. Koszul, 1922. M. Koszul found the plays in 1905 in a 'cheap exercise book, 8½" × 6" in boards' (now in the Bodleian). The date of their composition is fixed as 1820 by Mary's dating of the lyrics in her Notes to the Poems of 1820, and also by a MS. note by Medwin in his *Life* in the copy bought and published by Buxton Forman. See Introduction by M. Koszul.

## VII

AUGUST-OCTOBER 1820



If with Shelley to be near water was to want a boat, to have a house was to invite friends to fill it. His cousin Tom Medwin,<sup>1</sup> who had written to him from Geneva, was pressed to come to Italy, although with a warning—'we will make you as comfortable as we can, but our *ménage* is too philosophical to abound in much external luxury. The rest must be made up in good-will—Mrs. Shelley desires me to say how acceptable your visit will be to her'.

Invitations to Peacock, Hogg, and Leigh Hunt were permanently open, and now, at the end of July, he wrote to Keats, of whose illness he had heard and to whom he thought a visit to warmer skies might be of benefit. Because of certain passages in it, Keats's reply<sup>2</sup> is better known than Shelley's invitation, but fairness requires that in making any comparison of the characters of the two poets the letters should be read together. Excuses often made for the hint of ungraciousness in Keats's answer lose much of their potency when it is remembered that Shelley also was a sufferer; his disease may even have been tubercular, too, but whatever it was it kept him in constant pain that must have required a considerable effort of will not to influence his temper.

Pisa was near enough for him to go over almost daily to read

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Medwin, born 1788, lived at Horsham and was at Sion House Academy with Shelley. He held a commission in the 24th Light Dragoons and went to India with them, but retired on half-pay in 1819. His *Reminiscences of Byron* were published in 1824 (see p. 190) and *Shelley Papers* in 1833. Both were fanciful and inaccurate. He married Anne, Baroness Hamilton of Sweden, in 1825 and had two daughters. He lived on the Continent until late in life, when he returned to Horsham and died there in 1869.

<sup>2</sup> The letter from Keats is reproduced at page 126 here from the original Boscombe MSS. A. The version in the *Shelley Memorials* on which all editors of Keats have had to depend has minor inaccuracies which I have noted.

Greek with Mrs. Mason.<sup>1</sup> Remembering Mrs. Boinville and Mrs. Gisborne he wrote to Leigh Hunt:

You will think it my fate either to find or to imagine some lady of 45, very unprejudiced and philosophical, who has entered deeply into the best and selectest spirit of the age, with enchanting manners, and a disposition rather to like me, in every town that I inhabit.

The claims of Percy Florence prevented Mary from accompanying him, and, as in earlier London days, Claire was his constant companion. But Mrs. Mason was not 'Claire's Minerva' for nothing, and Mary was to benefit from her wisdom when she used her influence to obtain a situation for Claire as governess to the family of Professor Bojti in Florence, and insisted on her going to it.

Shelley took her there and returned on October 22nd, but it was not to be with Mary alone, for he brought back Tom Medwin. His schoolfellow's new-found enthusiasm for books and authorship could not long disguise the fact that he was more at home as a *pukka sahib* than as a student, but his company had not time to grow irksome at San Giuliano, for a week after his arrival the exceptional rains caused the Serchio to burst its banks, and Casa Prinni had to be abandoned from an upper window.

<sup>2</sup>'All this part of the country', wrote Mary later, 'is below the level of its rivers, and the consequence was that it was speedily flooded. The rising waters filled the square of the baths, in the lower part of which our house was situated. The canal overflowed in the garden behind; the rising waters on either side at last burst open the doors, and, meeting in the house, rose to the height of six feet. It was a picturesque sight at night to see the peasants driving the cattle from the plains below to the hills above the baths. A fire was kept up to guide these across the ford; and the forms of the men and animals showed in dark relief against the glare of the flames, which was reflected again in the waters that filled the square.'

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Mason must be the 'unknown lady' of the letter on the classics in *Letters*, Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 870.

<sup>2</sup> Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 840, note 1.

<sup>1</sup>My dear Keats,

Pisa, 27 July 1820.

I hear with great pain the dangerous accident that you have undergone, and Mr. Gisborne, who gives me the account of it, adds that you continue to wear a consumptive appearance. This consumption is a disease particularly fond of people who write such good verses as you have done, and with the assistance of an English winter it can often indulge its selection;—I do not think that young and amiable poets are at all bound to gratify its taste; they have entered into no bond with the Muses to that effect. But seriously (for I am joking on what I am very anxious about) I think you would do well to pass the winter after so tremendous an accident, in Italy, and if you think it as necessary as I do so long as you could [find] Pisa or its neighbourhood agreeable to you, Mrs. Shelley unites with myself in urging the request, that you would take up your residence with us. You might come by sea to Leghorn (France is not worth seeing, and the sea is particularly good for weak lungs), which is within a few miles of us. You ought at all events, to see Italy, and your health, which I suggest as a motive, might be an excuse to you. I spare declamation about the statues, and the paintings, and the ruins—and what is a greater piece of forbearance—about the mountain streams and the fields, the colours of the sky, and the sky itself.

I have lately read your 'Endymion' again and ever with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion. This, people in general will not endure, and that is the cause of the comparatively few copies which have been sold. I feel persuaded that you are capable of the greatest things, so you but will.

I always tell Ollier to send you copies of my books.—'Prometheus Unbound' I imagine you will receive nearly at the same time with this letter. 'The Cenci' I hope you have already received—it was studiously composed in a different style

'Below the *good* how far? but far above the *great*.'

In poetry I have sought to avoid system and mannerisms; I wish those who excel me in genius would pursue the same plan.

Whether you remain in England, or journey to Italy,—believe that you carry with you my anxious wishes for your health, happiness and success wherever you are, or whatever you undertake, and that I am, yours sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

<sup>1</sup> Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 808.

My dear Shelley,

<sup>1</sup>Hampstead, August, 1820.<sup>2</sup>

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost over-occupied, should write to me in the strain of the <sup>b</sup>letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation, it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much to heart to prophecy. There is no doubt that an <sup>c</sup>English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering hateful manner. Therefore, I must either voyage or journey to Italy, as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed<sup>d</sup> that, come what extreme may, I shall not be destined to remain in one spot long enough to take a hatred of any four particular bedposts. I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor <sup>e</sup>poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about <sup>f</sup>reputation. I received a copy of 'The Cenci', as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of—the <sup>g</sup>poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits nowadays is considered the <sup>h</sup>Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God.<sup>i</sup> An artist must serve Mammon;<sup>j</sup> he must have 'self-concentration'—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and <sup>k</sup>load every rift<sup>l</sup> of your subjects with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the <sup>m</sup>writer of 'Endymion' whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk.<sup>1</sup> I am in expectation of 'Prometheus' every day. Could I have my own wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript, or be now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first-blights on Hampstead Heath. I am returning advice upon your hands. Most of the <sup>n</sup>poems in the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from *Shelley Memorials* version with corrections from original n Boscombe MSS. A. It is a four-page letter 9 in. by 7½ in.

(a) No year. (b) Capital. (c) No capital. (d) insert 'when I think'. (e) Capital. (f) Capital. (g) Capital. (h) No capital. (i) No stop, a dash. (j) Inverted commas, *Faerie Queen*, II. vii. 28, l. 5, M.B.F. (k) Capital. (l) Insert 'you must explain my metaphor. to yourself'. (m) Capital.

Hampstead, August 11

My dear Shelley,

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost over-occupied, should write to me in the ~~form~~ of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much at heart to mention. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me; and do so in a haggard, hateful manner. Therefore I must either voyage or journey to Italy as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed when I think that come what or hence may, I shall not be distressed to remain in one spot long enough to take a halibut of any four particular bed-pests. I am glad you like any piece in my poor Poem;—which I would willingly let the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about Reputation. I received

a copy of the Cover, as from yourself from Flaubert. There only  
one part of it I am judge of, the Poetry, and dramatic  
effect, which by many spirits now a days is considered  
the main-moon. A modern work it is said must have  
a purpose, which may be the God - an artist must have  
Mummion - he must have "self concentration selfishness  
perhaps. You I am sure will forgive me for sincerely  
wondering that you might curb your magnanimity  
and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your  
subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must  
fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never out  
with your wings folded for six months together And  
not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*  
whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards -  
aim pick'd up and sorted to a suit. My imagination  
is a Monastery and I am its Monk you must  
explain my meta's " to yourself I am in expec-  
tation of Prometheus every day. Could I have  
my own wish for its interest effected you would  
have it still in manuscript - or be but now.

putting an end to the second vol. I remember your  
advising me not to publish my first-blights, on Hamp-  
stead Heath - I am returning a debt upon your hands  
Most of the Poems in the volume I send you have been  
written above two years, and would never have been  
published but from a hope of gain; so you see, I am  
inclined enough to take your advice now. I must  
express once more my deep sense of your kindness,  
adding my sincere thanks and respects for  
Mrs. Shelley. I am the hope of soon seeing you  
remain

most sincerely

John Keats

P. B. Shelley Esq<sup>r</sup>

P. B. Shelley Esq<sup>r</sup>

volume I send you, have been written above two years, and would never have been published but for<sup>n</sup> hope of gain; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now. I must express once more my deep sense of your kindness, adding my sincere thanks and respects for Mrs. Shelley.

In the hope of soon seeing you,

I remain most sincerely yours,

JOHN KEATS.

(n) 'from a'.



PART 4  
ITALY:  
'THE PISA CIRCLE'  
1820-1822  
\*\*\*\*\*



# I

OCTOBER 1820—FEBRUARY 1821



IN Pisa, Shelley and Mary established themselves in a house that Shelley described to Claire:

... We are now removed to a lodging on the Lung' Arno, which is sufficiently commodious, and for which we pay thirteen sequins a month. It is next door to that marble palace, and is called Palazzo Galetti, consisting of an excellent mezzanino, and of two rooms on the fourth story, all to the south, and with two fireplaces. The rooms above, one of which is Medwin's room and the other my study (congratulate me on my seclusion) are delightfully pleasant, and to-day I shall be employed in arranging my books and gathering my papers about me. Mary has a very good room below, and there is plenty of space for the babe. . . .

It was all very well for Shelley to congratulate himself on his seclusion. Mary as a woman had had no such 'privilege of withdrawal' when Claire lived with them, and now it was she again who had to bear the brunt of Tom Medwin. A great talker, he liked nothing better than to have a passive audience to whom he could air his literary views or tell his anecdotes of army life in India—a type of conversation that soon bored his cousin, who began to limit his intercourse with him to a nightly game of chess. Mary, making the best of a bad job, listened to him while she looked after Percy Florence or went about her household duties and took him with her as an escort to parties that Shelley did not want to attend.

One of the first people to make himself known to them was *il diavolo* Pacchiani,<sup>1</sup> a Professor with a plurality of Chairs

<sup>1</sup> At first Shelley listened with rapt attention to his eloquence, which he compared with that of Coleridge, but afterwards he grew to dislike him. 'Pacchiani is no great favourite of ours,' wrote Mary, 'he disgusted Shelley by telling a dirty story.'

which he neglected for the delights of a universal human provider, constituting himself a sort of social middleman whom everybody knew but nobody cared for. Through him they met Prince Mavrocordato:<sup>1</sup> exiled from Greece, talented and handsome, he was a glamorous figure to the Shelleys, who saw in him a nineteenth-century Hermes and Pericles in one; and friendship with him so developed that he became a daily visitor, reading Greek with Mary and talking politics to Shelley. 'Do you not envy my luck', Mary wrote to Mrs. Gisborne,<sup>2</sup> 'that, having begun Greek, an amiable, young, agreeable, and learned Greek Prince comes every morning to give me a lesson of an hour and a half.' She tried to give him English lessons in return, but he did not like the role of pupil; 'I have finished the two Oedipi with my Greek, and am now half-way through the Antigone. He is also my pupil in English, though not very regular.'<sup>3</sup>

Pacchiani also brought Sgricci, the Improvisatore, to call, as Mary and Shelley were enthusiastic over his performances at the theatre. In these 'Improvisations', a form of entertainment unknown in England, the performer appeared on the stage, and from suggestions written on pieces of paper and dropped into a bag selected a subject and at once proceeded to improvise upon it. Sometimes subjects were turned down as not 'tragediable'; but, with anything Sgricci chose to take up, his powers were so remarkable that Shelley thought he must really be possessed by some rhapsodic power, and compared him to the

<sup>1</sup> Prince Alexander Mavrocordato (1791-1865) was exiled from Greece in 1817 with his maternal uncle, Prince Caradja, Prince of Wallachia. He took an active part in the Greek revolt and was President of the first National Assembly proclaimed at Epidaurus in 1822. Byron thought highly of him, but Trelawny attached himself to the rival faction under Odysseus. Under the monarchy established in 1832 he served as Minister in leading European capitals. Shelley dedicated *Hellas* to him.

<sup>2</sup> Feb. 1821. Dowden, vol. ii, p. 363.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. In an unpublished paragraph of this letter in the Bodleian MSS. Mary says: 'Be so kind as to send the Sophocles by Pepi, and Xenophon's *Anabasis*, if you can find it among our books.' This must be the Sophocles found in Shelley's hand when he was drowned. Pepi was a carrier.

pythoness at Delphi. He tried to emulate the performance in the composition of his own poem, 'Orpheus', but the result decided him that the Anglo-Saxon brain does not rise to poetic frenzy to order. Nor did it always do so for an Italian: Claire reported very unfavourably on the efforts of the popular Madame Mazzli, whom she heard in Florence, and there were not wanting sceptics in Pisa who denounced Sgricci's powers as evidence less of inspiration in himself than of the suspension of the good sense in his audience. But Sgricci certainly composed better poetry in his trances than another poet, the Irish Count Taaffe, in his senses. A 'character' in the Pisan colony, he set up to be the laureate of it, and got some importance, if little poetry, out of the position. But he was such a universally accepted 'good fellow' that no one would quarrel with him, either for his abuse of the Muses or over his right to the handle that he put to his name. And, indeed, when he kept off verse, he had genuine literary talent; his Commentary on Dante's *Divine Comedy* so impressed Shelley that he sent it to Ollier, who got Murray to publish it.

The only person not pleased at this was Tom Medwin, who considered that his cousin's influence should be restricted to use on his own behalf.<sup>1</sup> His literary vanity and oppressive cheerfulness had the effect on Mary and Shelley of a *seccatura*;<sup>2</sup> 'he sits with us,' wrote Mary to Claire, 'and be one reading or writing, he insists upon interrupting one every moment to read all the fine things he either writes or reads'. But before 'the burden of Tom, which was beginning to be very heavy', was relieved by the arrival of his friends the Williamses from Geneva

<sup>1</sup> On Nov. 10th Shelley wrote to Ollier (Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 832): 'My friend Captain Medwin is with me, and has shown me a poem on Indian hunting, which he has sent you to publish. It is certainly a very elegant and classical composition, and even if it does not belong to the highest style of poetry, I should be surprised if it did not succeed.' The poem was in *Sketches in Hindoostan with other Poems*, published 1821.

<sup>2</sup> Medwin himself derives the term from *seccare*—to dry up (the faculties). *Life of Shelley*, ii. 54. This facetious attempt to connect the use of drying with the effect produced by a bore (drill) was evidently favoured by the Shelleys.

in January (1821), it was forgotten in the excitement of visits to the *pièce de résistance* among Pacchiani's protégées, the beautiful Emilia Viviani.<sup>1</sup> Nineteen years of age and daughter of the Marchese Niccolò Viviani, for twenty-one years Governor of Pisa, she had been banished by her mother's jealousy to the Convent (Conservatorio) of St. Anna.

<sup>2</sup>Poverina, she pines like a bird in a cage—ardently longs to escape from her prison-house. She was made for love. A miserable place is that Convent of St. Anna; and if you had seen, as I have done, the poor pensionnaires shut up in that narrow suffocating street in the summer, and in the winter, as now, shivering with cold, being allowed nothing to warm them but a few ashes, which they carry about in an earthen vase, you would pity them.

So Pacchiani<sup>2</sup>—and the stage was set for an orgy of devotion, pity, and indignation. First, on November 29th, Mary called with Claire, who was on holiday from Florence and was at once interested and sympathetic and enthusiastically offered to read English every morning with the captive. Then, in the following week, Shelley and Medwin went to the convent:

<sup>3</sup>. . . After passing through a gloomy portal, that led to a quadrangle, the area of which was crowded with crosses, memorials of old monastic times, we were soon in the presence of Emilia. . . . Emilia was indeed lovely and interesting. Her profuse black hair, tied in the most simple knot, after the manner of a Greek Muse in the Florence gallery, displayed to its full height her brow, fair as

<sup>1</sup> Emilia was Shelley's name for her. The record of the first visit to her in Claire's Journal refers to her as Teresa. Mary described her as Clorinda in *Lodore* with much the same particulars as Medwin: the classical brow, the pale complexion, and hair 'silken and glossy as the raven's wing'. 'She was more agreeable when silent and could be regarded as a picture, than when called into action. She was complimentary in her conversation and her manners were winning by their frankness and ease.' From a new biography, *Vita di una Donna*, by R. Viviani della Robbia (Florence, Sansoni, 1937), it is evident that it was her mother and not her step-mother, as hitherto stated, who sent her away from home. Dowden and Mrs. Marshall are also incorrect on other points; see page 138, note 1, below.

<sup>2</sup> Dowden, vol. ii, p. 369.

<sup>3</sup> Medwin, *Life*, edited H. Buxton Forman (1913), pp. 278–9.

that of the marble of which I speak. She was also of about the same height as the antique. Her features possessed a rare faultlessness, and almost Grecian contour, the nose and forehead making a straight line. . . . Her eyes had the sleepy voluptuousness, if not the colour of Beatrice Cenci's. They had indeed no definite colour, changing with the changing feeling, to dark or light, as the soul animated them. Her cheek was pale, too, as marble, owing to her confinement and want of air, or perhaps to 'thought'.

Gifts of books followed, daily visits to read poetry or take walks, and, between visits, frequent notes. None of Shelley's have been preserved, but those from Emilia of which the following is a sample show they were literally *billets doux*:

<sup>1</sup>(*To Shelley, December 10, 1820.*) My dear Brother, your courteous attentions overwhelm me, for I know that in no wise do I deserve them. Beside the trouble Claire takes to teach me your native tongue, you give me books! O my good, my dear friend! how can I prove to you my gratitude and make a return for your favours? My situation prevents me from doing this, notwithstanding my will, my duty, and the affection which I bear you. Pity me, therefore, and be assured of my eternal gratitude. Call me always, if you like, your Sister, for so sweet a name is very<sup>a</sup> dear to me; and I too will always call you my dear<sup>b</sup> Brother, and will consider you as though you were such indeed. You have already seen that I had anticipated you in this, which means that our hearts understand each other, that they have the same sentiments, and were created to be bound by a strong and constant friendship. I embrace my very dear<sup>c</sup> and beautiful sister Mary, whose company is so agreeable to me. Adieu, *sensible* Percy; take every care of your health, and do not forget your most affectionate sister and friend, Teresa Emilia.

There is more of sentimentality here than passion, as with Shelley there was more of infatuation than affection. Emilia was the inspiration for *Epipsychidion* in the sense that she sat as the model, beautiful and unhappy, from which the artist

<sup>1</sup> Dowden, vol. ii, p. 373. In the original, quoted in full by the Marchesa della Robbia, there is written across the top in English, 'To my good Friend Percy.'  
(a) *oltromodo*, extremely. (b) *diletto*, beloved. (c) *amatissima*, beloved.

drew a mystic portrait of Love proceeding from Beauty and Suffering.

<sup>1</sup>I love you!—Listen, O embodied Ray  
Of the great Brightness; I must pass away  
While you remain, and these light words must be  
Tokens by which you may remember me.  
Start not—the thing you are is unbetrayed,  
If you are human, and if but the shade  
Of some sublimer spirit . . . .

For Mary there was less to put up with in Shelley's ecstatic devotion than in their friends' curiosity about it. She had to keep a watch on herself that nothing she said or did could be construed as 'jealousy'—a situation which may not have been unforeseen by *il diavolo* when he first made the introduction, and was certainly fully realized and exploited by Emilia herself.

<sup>2</sup>. . . Mary does not write to me. Is it possible that she loves me less than the others do? I should be very much pained by that. I wish to flatter myself that it is only her son and her occupations which cause this. Is not this the case?

Mary could beg Shelley to reassure Emilia, wishing at the same time that she could explain that she understood the situation much too well either to protest or to interfere, but such explanations or reasonings were not opportune. Shelley, as confident as she was herself in the firm foundation of their marriage, took it for granted and paid no heed to the opinion of outsiders. Only another woman could understand the embarrassment to which this exposed his wife, and Claire, jealous by now and mocking,<sup>3</sup> was ready to be sympathetic; but Mary's earlier doubts of her capacity for loyalty, or even reticence, had been confirmed by their later intercourse and she did not want to confide in her. With outward calm she

<sup>1</sup> From Fragments connected with *Epipsychidion*.

<sup>2</sup> Dowden, vol. ii, p. 377.

<sup>3</sup> 'She always prayed to a saint, Emilia told Claire, "and every time she changes her lover", Claire noted in the Journal, "she changes her saint, adopting the one of her lover".' Dowden, vol. ii, p. 372.

bided her time and managed to write dispassionately to Leigh Hunt:

... It is grievous to see this beautiful girl wearing out the best years of her life in an odious convent, where both mind and body are sick from want of appropriate exercise for each. I think she has great talent, if not genius—or if not an internal fountain how could she have acquired the mastery she has of her own language, which she writes so beautifully, or those ideas which lift her so far above the rest of the Italians? She has not studied much, and now, hopeless from a five years' confinement, everything disgusts her, and she looks with hatred and distaste even on the alleviations of her situation. Her only hope is in a marriage which her parents tell her is concluded, although she has never seen the person intended for her....

By the beginning of January, Shelley's references to Emilia in letters to Claire, now back at Florence, show that the whirlwind of sentiment which had produced the *billets doux* on one side and *Epipsychidion* on the other was abating:

... I see Emilia sometimes, who always talks of you and laments your absence. She continues to enchant me infinitely; and I soothe myself with the idea that I make the discomfort of her captivity lighter to her by demonstration of the interest which she has awakened in me....

and a fortnight later 'love has turned to kindness' indeed:

... I see Emily sometimes; and whether her presence is the source of pain or pleasure to me, I am equally ill-fated in both. I am deeply interested in her destiny, and that interest can in no manner influence it. She is not, however, insensible to my sympathy, and she counts it among her alleviations. As much comfort as she receives from my attachment to her, I lose.

There is no reason that you should fear any mixture of that which you call *love*. My conception of Emilia's talents augments every day. Her moral nature is fine—but not above circumstances; yet I think her tender and true—which is always something. How many are only one of these things at a time!...

In retrospect, a year later, he was to write to John Gisborne:

... The 'Epipsychidion' I cannot look at, the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno; and poor Ixion starts from the centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace. If you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. It is an idealized history of my life and feelings. I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal. . . .

'Juno' had not only consented to marry the man her father chose for her but enrolled herself amongst Shelley's debtors!<sup>1</sup> With an asperity that was a natural reaction from her self-restraint during the episode Mary summed it all up in her letter to Maria Gisborne:

Emilia has married Biondi; we hear that she leads him and his mother (to use a vulgarism) a devil of a life. The conclusion of our friendship (*à la Italiana*) puts me in mind of a nursery rhyme which runs thus—

'As I was going down Cranbourne Lane,  
Cranbourne Lane was dirty,  
And there I met a pretty maid  
Who dropt to me a curtesy.  
  
'I gave her cakes, I gave her wine,  
I gave her sugar-candy;  
But oh! the little naughty girl,  
She asked me for some brandy.'

<sup>1</sup> It remains a pity that Shelley's Emilia became one of his 'dear' friends, but in justice to her it must be stated that newly published letters prove that the loan was for a woman friend and that she suggested that Byron should share in providing it. She is hardly to blame for the failure of her marriage; her mother-in-law was harsh and her dissolute husband treated her with real cruelty. She lost the four children that she bore in the first five years of her marriage; her health undermined by the climate of the Maremma, she was allowed to return to her father's house in Florence in 1826. On his death, the heir made her no allowance, and as Biondi refused to return her dowry she would have died in acute poverty but for the devotion of a certain doctor, Passeri, who attended her and provided for her. Medwin records a visit to her in a poor quarter of the city just before her death in 1836. See *Vita di una Donna*, by R. Viviani della Robbia, Florence, Sansoni, 1937.

Now turn 'Cranbourne Lane' into Pisan acquaintances, which, I am sure, are dirty enough, and 'brandy' into that wherewithal to buy brandy (and that no small sum *però*), and you have the whole story of Shelley's Italian Platonics.

## II

FEBRUARY–AUGUST 1821



In spite of disillusionment, acquaintance with Emilia still continued, and the Journal records visits to the convent and walks with her,<sup>1</sup> but another name, that of the Williamses, began to predominate:

*Tuesday, February 6th.* Read Greek. Sit to Williams. Call on Emilia Viviani. Prince Mavrocordato in the evening. A long metaphysical argument.

*Thursday, February 27th.* Read Greek. The Williams' to dine with us. Walk with them. Il Diavolo Pacchiani calls. Shelley reads 'The Ancient Mariner' aloud.

*Saturday, March 4th.* Read Greek (no lesson). Walk with the Williams'. Read Horace with Shelley in the evening. A delightful day.

*Sunday, March 5th.* Read Greek. Write letters. The Williams' to dine with us. Walk with them. Williams relates his history. They spend the evening with us, with Prince Mavrocordato and Mr. Taafe.

Edward Williams was liked at once by both Mary and Shelley, but Jane,<sup>2</sup> whom Mary was to describe later as a 'violet by a

<sup>1</sup> The conditions in the Convent could not have been so 'tyrannical' if the 'captive' was allowed these frequent interviews with a young Englishman! From *Vita di una Donna* it appears that discipline alternated between the unbounded indulgence of the 85-year-old Directrice and the extreme rigour of Emilia's special guardian, Eusta Petrucci.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Williams had married a Mr. Johnson in the West Indies who had treated her badly and obliged her to leave him. She was never legally married either to Williams or to Hogg. For further particulars see *After Shelley*, by Sylvia Norman. The lady referred to in Shelley's letter to Hogg, April 20th, 1820 (not 1821), Julian edition, vol. x, p. 158, is not Jane but Mrs. Mason.

mossy stone', was slower to gain a hold on their affections: they admired her prettiness, but thought her shallow. Although their story was as 'romantic' as that of most of the expatriates who formed the English colony at Pisa, Edward and Jane were temperamentally the most normal friends the Shelleys ever had. With Edward's encouragement Shelley was able to indulge his love of boating as never before, and if this meant for the time being a check to his creative work the benefit to his health and spirits must not be begrudged. With *Epipsychidion* and *Adonais* accomplished within six months, he could afford a rest; and, indeed, the short poems written from now onwards, while not so ambitious, show, in their lyric power, a new musical quality that earlier verses lacked. Except to those who believe in the efficacy of starvation for poets, happiness is no bad thing!

Besides being 'lively and possessing great talent in drawing', Edward Williams<sup>1</sup> had a genuine literary taste without any of his friend Tom Medwin's vanity, and, however far below Shelley's intellectual standard he might be, his natural good sense and his encouraging interest had a better effect on him than the alternate stimulation and depression of Byron or the sedative influence of Leigh Hunt.

Of earlier friends, Peacock was always too academic to have much ascendancy over his mind, although it was to his fine sense as a scholar that Shelley appealed when he addressed to him his Italian letters. With Hogg correspondence was less regular, and Shelley's letters,<sup>2</sup> as far as we can judge from the answers to them, can have contained little more than gossip and 'news'; Hogg's have a certain charm in their superficiality

<sup>1</sup> He wrote a play *The Promise*. MS. in Bodleian Library.

<sup>2</sup> No letters to Hogg are given for 1820 or 1821 by Ingpen (Julian edition has one for April 20th, 1820, vol. x, p. 158), although references in other letters show that he wrote to him and had invited him to come out to Italy. The letter quoted below from Hogg is from the Boscombe MSS. A, hitherto unpublished (May 21st, 1820). There is a letter from Shelley to Hogg, Oct. 22nd, 1821, in *Shelley-Leigh Hunt, How friendship made history*, edited R. Brimley Johnson, 1928.

which suggests that Shelley could still bring out the best in the friend of his youth, grow away from him as he might. The rising barrister makes fun of Leigh Hunt, but very gently; there is a hint of facetiousness to come, but he has a kind remembrance for Mary and her son, and now that he has turned botanist he asks for Italian specimens and encloses a little flower from Marlow.

One of the first boating adventures that Shelley undertook with Williams was an expedition on the Arno to the canal in a shallow ten-foot boat that had cost him a few pauls and to which he had got Henry Reveley to add a keel. Maria Gisborne, sharing the apprehension of the native Italians who considered the Arno unnavigable, insisted on her son's accompanying them. It was fortunate that he did so, for by the end of the day he had had to rescue Shelley, retrieve the capsized craft, and find lodgings for all three of them at night in an Italian *casale*. Williams, who thought there was nothing about a boat that he did not know (his lack of vanity failed at seamanship), had suddenly stood up, and in steadying himself by seizing hold of the mast capsized the boat.

'That canal', wrote Henry Reveley, 'is broad and deep; so finding no bottom, I sent Williams on shore, as he could swim a little, and then caught hold of Shelley, and told him to be calm and quiet, and I would take him on shore. His answer, characteristic of his undaunted courage, was, "All right; never more comfortable in my life; do what you will with me." But as soon as I set him down on shore, he fell flat down on his face in a faint.'

But the ducking, in Shelley's own words, added fire instead of quenching the nautical ardour which produced it; and he awaited eagerly the larger boat which was to come from Leghorn and in which, during the coming summer, he and Williams were to sail on the canal between their homes at San Giuliano and Pugnano.

Meanwhile, there were other excitements in Pisa; on April

<sup>1</sup> From the diary of Henry Reveley, quoted by Dowden, vol. ii, p. 399.

and Mavrocordato rushed into Casa Aulla to announce the proclamation of Greek independence, 'as gay as a caged eagle just free'. The Neapolitan rising might have been quelled by the Austrian troops that they had seen marching through Pisa, but the spirit of liberty still stirred. Mary wrote off jubilantly to Claire:

Pisa, April 2, 1821.

ὑψιλάντι, ὕψιλάντι

<sup>1</sup>My dear Clare,

Greece has declared its freedom! Prince Mavrocordato has made us expect this event for some weeks past. Yesterday, he came *rayonnant de joie*—he had been ill for some days, but he forgot all his pains. Ipselanti, a Greek general in the service of Russia, has collected together 10,000 Greeks and entered Wallachia, declaring the liberty of his country. The Morea—Epirus—Servia are in revolt. Greece will most certainly be free. The worst part of this news to us is that our amiable prince will leave us—he will of course join his countrymen as soon as possible—never did man appear so happy—yet he sacrifices family—fortune—everything to the hope of freeing his country. Such men are repaid—such succeed. You may conceive the deep sympathy that we feel with his joy on this occasion: tinged as it must be with anxiety for success—made serious by the knowledge of the blood that must be shed on this occasion. What a delight it will be to visit Greece free . . .

The end of this letter is written by Shelley and throws a sidelight on a characteristic feature of his correspondence—the drawings of trees, which are to be found not only on letters but also on manuscripts and on the outside pages of the books which contain the Journal:

. . . Pray don't imagine that the trees upon the letter you sent to Mary are my manufacture—I disclaim such daubs, and I had hoped that you knew my style too well to impute them to me. The love-letters themselves do not seem to have been meant for you. Is there no other Clara Clairmont but the one to whom I declare myself the constant and affectionate friend,  
S.  
[The drawing of a tree follows with the words 'That is my style'.]

<sup>1</sup> Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 861 seq.

Claire, homesick in Florence, badly needed consolation from the letters Shelley wrote to her, for on March 15th she had heard that Allegra had been sent to a convent in Bagnacavallo.<sup>1</sup> Once more she appealed to Byron: 'I resigned Allegra to you that she might be benefited by advantages which I could not give her'; if the child is to be sent away, she begs that it may be to receive an English or a Swiss education; Mrs. Hoppner, any one unprejudiced, would advise him on the dangers of the Italian system.

Byron forwarded the letter to the Hoppners with the remark,<sup>2</sup> 'The moral part of this letter upon the Italians, etc., comes with an excellent grace from the writer, now living with a *man* and his *wife*, and having planted a child in the Fl Foundling, etc.' But to Shelley he wrote:

Ravenna, April 26th, 1821.

<sup>3</sup>The child continues doing well, and the accounts are regular and favourable. It is gratifying to me that you and Mrs. Shelley do not disapprove of the step which I have taken, which is merely temporary.

I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats—is it *actually* true? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Though I differ from you essentially in your estimate of his performances, I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. . . .

P.S. Could not you and I contrive to meet this Summer? Could not you take a run here *alone*?

This letter shows Byron's cowardice as much as his duplicity. Byron was always a bully; he dares not repeat to Shelley what he says behind his back, and he, the author of the couplet on

<sup>1</sup> See letter from Allegra, Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> Dowden, vol. ii, p. 428. As the Shelleys were at Pisa and Claire at Florence, Professor Bojti and his wife would seem to be indicated!

<sup>3</sup> Shelley's letter to which this is an answer is only in the Julian edition, vol. x, p. 254. This reply is taken by permission from *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, Murray, vol. ii, p. 169.

the 'fiery particle', sheds crocodile tears for Keats! The contrast between the two men comes out nowhere more clearly than over Claire: she might be exasperating—Shelley, as he reminds Byron, never sees her letters—but her anxiety is great and that for him is the supreme plea. 'The weak and the foolish are in this respect kings; they can do no wrong.' Weakness brought out the best in Shelley; it brought out the worst in Byron.

'It seems that I am always destined to have some active part in everybody's affairs whom I approach.' Shelley would gladly have broken with Byron, but kept up the friendship for the sake of Claire and Allegra; and now, at the beginning of August, when he had returned from house-hunting in Florence for the Horace Smiths, he found a pressing invitation to come to Ravenna before Byron migrated with the Guicciolis, who had been expelled on political grounds from the Roman States.

If Shelley and Mary had not disapproved of the convent at Bagnacavallo for Allegra while her father was within easy reach of it they felt very differently now that he intended to go away and there would be no one in the district to be responsible for her. To tell Claire would only be to worry her uselessly; a letter in protest might drive Byron to a worse scheme; there was nothing for it but that Shelley should accept the invitation and try what his personal influence could do.

Travelling exposed him to considerable discomfort at this time, and he had returned from Florence in order to be at home for his birthday, to receive from Mary's own hands the miniature for which she had been daily sitting to Williams, but neither he nor Mary hesitated. He must set off at once and try to persuade Byron to keep the child with him, or perhaps to let her be brought up with Percy Florence.<sup>1</sup> On his way he would stop at Leghorn to see Claire, who had gone there from Florence

<sup>1</sup> Byron refused to consider this alternative ('She shall not perish of starvation and green fruit, or be taught to believe there is no Deity'). Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 821.

for the benefit of the sea-air, but he would not worry her by telling her anything about Byron's new move.<sup>1</sup>

Shelley's sentiments never outran his sympathies; he had not let the Marlow lace-makers starve while he waited for the dawn of a new political era, and he was ready now, in the service of an unhappy mother and an ill-fated child, to put his own interests last and to exert to the full those qualities harder to come by than the grandiloquent virtues of *Queen Mab*—the patience, tact, and judgement that the years had brought him.

(<sup>2</sup>*Hogg to Shelley.*)

London. May 21st 1820.

My dear Friend,

It gave me much pleasure to receive a letter from you and to be assured that the lotus does not induce an oblivion of friendship as well as of country.

[account of life; passed between circuit and reading Greek.]

Peacock has lately married and in my opinion very judiciously; notwithstanding his *various* occupations, we sometimes find time for noctes atticae or long walks.

I visit Hunt whenever I can; the unfortunate credulity wh. can lead him to believe that a suburban residence is rural, makes it somewhat inconvenient, but I muster up courage to traverse brick fields and dusty outskirts and find him always kind and agreeable;

[account of Boinvilles and others.]

I am amused by what you say of the fair Grecian<sup>a</sup> with whom you read the Agamemnon of Aeschylus; when you have finished that Tragedy, read with the lady, whom as you have not named, I must call Clytemnestra, the Electra of Sophocles; that you may be deterred from following the example of Aegisthus.

I shd. like to see Percy Shelley the younger and to steal behind

<sup>1</sup> It is taken for granted by Dowden that Shelley went to see Claire at Leghorn in order to break the news to her (vol. ii, p. 420), but this was not the case. See the paragraph hitherto omitted from Shelley's letter to Mary from Bologna on Aug. 6th (Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 885), where he cautions her not to let Claire or the Masons know that he has gone to see Byron. Paragraph restored in Julian edition, vol. x, p. 296. Original in Bodleian MSS.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished letter from Boscombe MSS. A.

(a) This is Mrs. Mason, not Jane Williams nor Emilia Viviani.

some laurel bush, where you are singing shrilly like a king; but that cannot be, Remember me kindly to Mary and believe me, my

Dear Friend, ever yours faithfully and affectionately,

T. JEFFERSON HOGG.

1 Garden Court Temple.

### III

AUGUST 1821



*Saturday, August 4th.* Williams all day. Read Homer. Walk. Call on Madame Tantini. Williams finishes my miniature. Shelley's birthday. Seven years are now gone; what changes! What a life! We now appear tranquil; yet who knows what wind—but I will not prognosticate evil; we have had enough of it. When Shelley came to Italy, I said all is well if it were permanent; it was more passing than an Italian twilight. I now say the same. May it be a Polar day; yet that day, too, has an end.

→ So Mary looked before and after on Shelley's twenty-ninth birthday, while he, away on his journey to Ravenna, was spending the day at Leghorn with Claire: rowing in the harbour before breakfast and sailing far out to sea in the afternoon, 'a very fine warm day; the white sails of ships upon the horizon looked like doves stooping over the water'.<sup>1</sup> And the next day he was on the road again, travelling all through the night in a little open *calesso* to Bologna.

From there he came by chaise to Ravenna and arrived at the Guiccioli Palace at ten o'clock at night; the hall reverberated with the noise of a dog-fight in which cats and a bird were involved, and up the noble marble staircase three monkeys were balancing and swinging by their tails from the balustrade. In the apartment into which he was shown there were more of the menagerie; Byron replaced a falcon on its perch as he rose from a couch to greet his guest and threatened a growling bulldog with his sword-stick. Teresa Guiccioli was

<sup>1</sup> Claire's Journal. Dowden, vol. ii, p. 420.

away at Florence, but Byron had made himself perfectly at home in her husband's house; he ordered the servants to make the tea which he knew Shelley could consume at any time of day or night and ordered more of the dry biscuits that were the only food he allowed himself with his soda-water. Then he settled down to talk until the small hours.

To Mary, Shelley wrote:

Ravenna, 7th August, 1821.

My dearest Mary—

I arrived last night at ten o'clock and sate up talking with Lord Byron until five this morning. I then went to sleep, and now awake at eleven, and having despatched my breakfast as quick as possible, mean to devote the interval until twelve, when the post departs, to you. . . .

. . . Lord Byron had almost destroyed himself in Venice: his state of debility was such that he was unable to digest any food, he was consumed by hectic fever, and would speedily have perished, but for this attachment, which has reclaimed him from the excesses into which he threw himself from carelessness and pride, rather than taste. Poor fellow! he is now quite well, and immersed in politics and literature. He has given me a number of the most interesting details on the former subject, but we will not speak of them in a letter. . . .

But it was not only of politics and literature that Byron talked; never able to resist for long the titillation of gossip or giving away other people's secrets, he soon showed Shelley a letter he had received from the Hoppners.<sup>1</sup> In this Mr. Hoppner

<sup>1</sup> The letter from Hoppner is in *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, vol. ii, p. 180. '... You are surprised, and with reason, at the change of my opinion respecting Shiloe [Shelley]: it certainly is not that which I once entertained of him: but if I disclose to you my fearful secret, I trust, for his unfortunate wife's sake, if not out of regard to Mrs. Hoppner and me, that you will not let the Shelleys know that we are acquainted with it. This request you will find so reasonable that I am sure you will comply with it, and I therefore proceed to divulge to you, what indeed on Allegra's account it is necessary that you should know, as it will fortify you in the good resolution you have already taken never to trust her again to her mother's care. . . .' Byron replied: 'Of the facts however there can be little doubt; it is just like them. You may be sure that I keep your counsel.' *Ibid.*, p. 183.

said that he had heard from Elise that Claire had been Shelley's mistress and that between them they had treated Mary very badly and had had a child which they put in the Florence Foundling Hospital. Of course, Byron explained, he had laughed the story to scorn and would tell Hoppner it was quite absurd. The mischief done, Byron made for cover. But for Shelley the matter could not rest there; however much it might pain her, he had to tell Mary:

... I need not dictate what you should say; nor, I hope, inspire you with warmth to rebut a charge, which you only can effectually rebut. If you will send the letter to me here, I will forward it to the Hoppners. Lord Byron is not up, I do not know the Hoppners' address, and I am anxious not to lose a post.

Mary wrote at once, enclosing a letter to Mrs. Hoppner:

<sup>1</sup>My dear Shelley,

Shocked beyond all measure as I was, I instantly wrote the enclosed. If the task be not too dreadful, pray copy it for me; I cannot.

Read that part of your letter that contains the accusation. I tried, but I could not write it. I think I could as soon have died. I send also Elise's last letter; enclose it or not as you think best.

I wrote to you with far different feelings last night, beloved friend. Our barque is indeed 'tempest-tost,' but love me as you have ever done, and God preserve my child to me, and our enemies shall not be too much for us. Consider well if Florence be a fit residence for us. I love, I own, to face danger, but I would not be imprudent.

Pray get my letter to Mrs. Hoppner copied for a thousand reasons. Adieu, dearest! Take care of yourself—all yet is well. The shock for me is over, and I now despise the slander; but it must not pass uncontradicted. I sincerely thank Lord Byron for his kind unbelief.

Affectionately yours,

M. W. S.

Friday.

Do not think me imprudent in mentioning Claire's<sup>a</sup> illness at

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 297. Dowden, vol. ii, pp. 424-5.

(a) Dowden puts 'Claire's' as above. Mrs. Marshall puts 'E's' and a footnote; 'This initial has been printed C. Mrs. Shelley's letter leaves no doubt that Elise's is the illness referred to.' On the contrary, the original letter shows C for Claire. Bodleian MSS.

Naples. It is well to meet facts. They are as cunning as wicked. I have read over my letter; it is written in haste, but it were as well that the first burst of feeling should be expressed. No letters.

Mary's letter to Mrs. Hoppner<sup>1</sup> which is quoted below (p. 151) speaks for itself in evidence of the complete confidence between her and Shelley, but there are other points also which it raises. Did Byron ever forward the letter to the Hoppners? The fact that it was found among his papers at his death has made Shelley's biographers conclude that it was never sent. Certainly neither of the Hoppners answered it.<sup>2</sup> Internal evidence is also against Byron. Although he led Shelley to believe that he had refuted the story, he had really written to Hoppner, 'Of the facts however there can be little doubt; it is just like them', and he can hardly have been anxious to admit to Hoppner that he had betrayed his confidence.

On the other hand, Murray must be heard for the defence, and I therefore quote the relevant passage in full.

3. . . It is clear from the letters before us that Mary Shelley sent her letter to Shelley unsealed, with a request that he would copy it, and read it to Lord Byron. We know that Mary's letter was not copied by Shelley; and we also know that its contents were read by Byron. It was then sealed, and was handed to Byron, who promised to forward it to the Hoppners with an explanatory letter from himself. Mary Shelley's holograph letter lies before us. On it is Shelley's seal in red wax, but the seal is broken, and at the top of that seal there is a drop of black sealing-wax, with a scrap of paper attached to it. This had evidently become detached from its envelope in removal. Shelley's seal has been pressed flat on its outer rim, as though

<sup>1</sup> Dowden and Mrs. Marshall do not give it in full; they only had access to the copy (now in the Bodleian) made by Lady Shelley from the original in the possession of Lady Dorchester. The full letter was published for the first time in *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, Murray, 1922. Lady Dorchester was a daughter of Hobhouse, Byron's friend and executor. See p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> Mary records that she cut Mrs. Hoppner when they met in 1843.

<sup>3</sup> *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, Murray, 1922, vol. ii, p. 191.

crushed in the act of sealing the covering letter. The address, written in Mary's hand, is simply:

'A Madame  
Mad<sup>me</sup> Hoppner.'

There is no address. This proves that if it reached its destination it must have been conveyed under a separate cover. Shelley's biographers declare upon evidence which satisfied a too willing credulity that the letter never reached Mrs. Hoppner. The grounds of their argument being that the letter in question was found among Byron's papers after his death, and that, so far as they know, no reply to it ever reached Mary Shelley.

The present writer, for the following reasons, as firmly believes that the letter did reach Mrs. Hoppner, and that Byron forwarded it according to his promise. Shelley stated in distinct terms that the contents of Mary's letter were made known to Byron—it was almost certainly read by him. If so, we may ask who can have broken the seal of that letter? As Byron well knew its contents, there would have been no reason for him to do so. And yet, the seal is broken. By whom? By Hobhouse? By Lady Dorchester? Assuredly not.

The letter found among Byron's papers in 1824 was addressed, as we have stated, to Madame Hoppner and sealed. Is it conceivable that such a man as Hobhouse—honorable, punctilious, and business-like as he was—would have tampered with the seal, and withheld that letter from the person to whom it was addressed? Would he not have written to his friend Hoppner, who was at that time still British Consul at Venice; would he not have told Hoppner that a sealed letter, addressed to his wife by Mary Shelley, was found among Byron's papers? But, supposing that Hobhouse may have felt some delicacy in communicating with Hoppner, would he not have told Mary Shelley, who, as he knew, was at that time living not far distant, in lodgings at Kentish Town?

There is but one reason, in our opinion, why Hobhouse did nothing in the matter. The letter which came into his hands as Byron's executor was, so to speak, an open letter, its seal broken. He was at liberty to read it, and having done so he probably concluded that the matter had been settled. . . .

The vexed question must remain open. Only the discovery of further Hoppner papers can settle it.

Pisa, August 11, 1821.

<sup>1</sup>My Dear Mrs. Hoppner,—After a silence of nearly two years I address you again, and most bitterly do.<sup>a</sup> I regret the occasion on which I now write. Pardon me that I do not write in French; you understand English well, and I am too much impressed to shackle myself in a foreign language; even in my own my thoughts far out-run my pen, so that I can hardly form the letters. I write to defend him to whom I have the happiness to be united, whom I love and esteem beyond all<sup>b</sup> creatures, from the foulest calumnies; and to you I write this, who were so kind [and] to Mr. Hoppner; to both of whom I indulged the pleasing idea that I have every reason to feel gratitude. This is indeed a painful task.

Shelley is at present on a visit to Lord Byron at Ravenna, and I received a letter from him to-day containing accounts that make my hand tremble so much that I can hardly hold the pen. It tells me that Elise wrote to you relating the most hideous stories against him, and that you have believed them. Before I speak of these falsehoods permit [me] to say a few words concerning this miserable girl. You well know that she formed an attachment with Paolo when we proceeded to Rome, and at Naples their marriage was talked of. We all tried to dissuade her; we knew Paolo to be a rascal, and we thought so well of her that we believed him to be unworthy of her. An accident led me to the knowledge that without marrying they had formed a connexion; she was ill, we sent for a doctor who said there was danger of a miscarriage. I would not turn<sup>c</sup> the girl on the world without in some degree binding her to this man. We had them married at Sir W. A'Court's<sup>d</sup>—she left us; turned Catholic at Rome, married him, and then went to Florence. After the disastrous death of my child we came to Tuscany. We have seen little of them; but we have had knowledge that Paolo has formed a scheme of extorting money from Shelley by false accusations—he has written him threatening letters, saying that he w<sup>d</sup> be the ruin of him, &c. We placed these in the hands of a celebrated lawyer here who has done what he can to silence him. Elise has never interfered in this, and indeed the other day I received a letter from her, entreating with great professions of love that I would send

<sup>1</sup> From *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, vol. ii, p. 185; Dowden, ii. 425.

(a) Dowden omits full stop. (b) Dowden inserts 'living'. (c) Dowden has 'throw'. (d) Dowden has 'R' instead of 'W'.

her money. I took no notice of this; but although I knew<sup>a</sup> her to be in evil hands, I would not believe that she was wicked enough to join in his plans without proof.

And now I come to her accusations—and I must indeed summon all my courage while I transcribe them; for tears will force their way, and how can it be otherwise? You knew Shelley, you saw his face, and could you believe them? Believe them only on the testimony of a girl whom you despised? I had hopes<sup>b</sup> that such a thing was impossible, and that although strangers might believe the calumnies that this man propagated, none who had ever seen my husband could for a moment credit them.

She<sup>c</sup> says Clare was Shelley's mistress, that—upon my word, I solemnly assure you that I cannot write the words, I send you a part of Shelley's letter that you may see what I am now about to refute—but I had rather die that [*sic*] copy anything so vilely, so wickedly false, so beyond all imagination fiendish.

<sup>d</sup>*I am perfectly convinced in my own mind that Shelley never had an improper connexion with Clare—at the time specified in Elise's letter, the winter after we quitted Este, I suppose while she was with us, and that was at Naples, we lived in lodgings where I had momentary entrance into every room, and such a thing could not have passed unknown to me. The malice of the girl is beyond all thought—I now remember that Clare did keep her bed there for two days—but I attended on her—I saw the physician—her illness was one that she had been accustomed to for years—and the same remedies were employed as I had before ministered to her in England.*

*Clare had no child—the rest must be false—<sup>e</sup>but that you should believe it—that my beloved Shelley should stand thus slandered in your minds—he the gentlest and most humane of creatures, is more painful to me, oh far more painful than any words can express.<sup>e</sup>*

*It is all a lie—Clare is timid; she always showed respect even for me—poor dear girl! She has some faults—you know them as well as I—but her heart is good, and if ever we quarrelled, which was seldom, it was I, and not she, that was harsh, and our instantaneous reconciliations were sincere and affectionate.*

Need I say that the union between my husband and myself has ever been undisturbed. Love caused our first imprudence, love

(a) Dowden has 'know'. (b) Dowden has 'hoped'. (c) Dowden has 'He'.  
(d) These paragraphs in italics omitted by Dowden, with exception of passage (e).

which improved by esteem, a perfect trust one in the other, a confidence and affection which, visited as we have been by severe calamities (have we not lost two children?) has encreased [*sic*] daily, and knows no bounds.

I will add that Clare has been separated from us for about a year. She lives with a respectable German family at Florence. The reasons of this were obvious—her connexion with us made her manifest as the Miss Clairmont, the mother of Allegra—besides we live much alone—she enters much into society there—and solely occupied with the idea of the welfare of her child, she wished to appear such that she may not be thought in aftertimes to be unworthy of fulfilling the maternal duties. You ought to have paused before you tried to convince the father of her child of such unheard-of atrocities on her part. If his generosity and knowledge of the world had not made him reject the slander with the ridicule it deserved what irretrievable mischief you would have occasioned her!

Those who know me will<sup>a</sup> believe my simple word—it is not long ago that my father said in a letter to me, that he had never known me to utter a falsehood—but you, easy as you have been to credit evil, who may be more deaf to truth—to you I swear—by all that I hold sacred upon heaven and earth by a vow which I should die to write if I affirmed a falsehood—I swear by the life of my child, by my blessed and beloved child, that I know these accusations to be false.

<sup>b</sup>*Shelley is as incapable of cruelty as the softest woman. To those who know him his humanity is almost as a proverb. He has been unfortunate as a father, the laws of his country and death has [*sic*] cut him off from his dearest hopes. But his enemies have done him incredible mischief—but that you should believe such a tale coming from such a hand, is beyond all belief, a blow quite unexpected, and the very idea of it beyond words shocking.*

But I have said enough to convince you, and are you not convinced? are not my words the words of truth? Repair, I conjure you, the evil you have done by retracting your confidence in one so vile as Elise, and by writing to me that you now reject as false every circumstance of her infamous tale.

You were kind to us, and I shall<sup>c</sup> never forget it; now I require

(a) Dowden has 'well'. (b) Paragraph in italics omitted by Dowden.

(c) Dowden has 'will'.

justice; you must believe me,<sup>a</sup> I solemnly entreat [*sic*] you, the justice to confess that you do so.

MARY W. SHELLEY.

I send this letter to Shelley at Ravenna, that he may see it. For although I ought, the subject is too odious to me to copy it. I wish also that Lord Byron should see it. He gave no credit to the tale, but it is as well that he should see how entirely fabulous it is.

#### IV

AUGUST 1821-FEBRUARY 1822



BYRON made it as difficult as possible for his guest to get away; accustomed to taking it for granted that the world revolved round himself, he laughed off or ignored Shelley's talk of leaving, and La Guiccioli wrote from Florence to beg him to stay, or, if he really had to return home, to be sure to take Byron with him. He would not go without visiting Allegra at her convent, and by August 15th he was able to write to Mary that he had seen her.

<sup>1</sup>. . . She is grown tall and slight for her age, and her face is somewhat altered. The traits have become more delicate, and she is much paler, probably from the effect of improper food. She yet retains the beauty of her deep blue eyes and of her mouth, but she has a contemplative seriousness, which, mixed with her excessive vivacity, which has not yet deserted her, has a very peculiar effect in a child. . . .

Although she had become unusually obedient, he did not think that she was unhappy, and she was evidently allowed a good deal of freedom.

<sup>2</sup>. . . Before I went away she made me run all over the convent like a mad thing. The nuns, who were half in bed, were ordered to hide themselves, and on returning Allegra began ringing the bell

(a) Dowden has 'and do me, I solemnly entreat you . . . '.

<sup>1</sup> Ingpen, vol. ii, pp. 900 seqq. Omissions at beginning of letter restored in Julian edition, vol. x, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 901.

which calls the nuns to assemble. The tocsin of the convent sounded, and it required all the efforts of the prioress to prevent the spouses of God from rendering themselves, dressed or undressed, to the accustomed signal. Nobody scolded her for these *scappature*, so I suppose she is well treated so far as temper is concerned. Her intellect is not much cultivated. She knows certain orazioni by heart, and talks and *dreams* of Paradiso and angels and all sorts of things, and has a prodigious list of saints, and is always talking of the Bambino. This will do her no harm, but the idea of bringing up so sweet a creature in the midst of such trash till sixteen!

Mary and Shelley were undecided where to settle for the winter. Florence would have attractions if the Horace Smiths came out there, but on the other hand there was Pisa ('our roots never struck so deeply as at Pisa'), where the climate and the water had suited Shelley's health and they had made congenial friends. If Byron decided to settle there as well, it might be possible to find a family to take Allegra, or even a convent—provided it were not Emilia's convent of St. Anna. 'Our first thought ought to be Allegra, our second our own plans', Shelley had written, characteristically.<sup>1</sup>

A letter from Horace Smith saying that his wife was ill and would not be able to come to Italy turned the scales definitely in favour of Pisa, and the Shelleys began to look for houses. They secured the magnificent Casa Lanfranchi on the Lung' Arno for Byron and took a top flat in the Tre Palazzi opposite for themselves. This they moved into at the end of October 1821.

Shelley might write to Horace Smith, 'Florence will no longer have any attractions for me this winter, and I shall contentedly sit down in this humdrum Pisa . . .'; but in the arrangements he had been busy making all the summer for the lamb to lie down with the lion ('the wren' and 'the eagle' to fly together) he had insured himself against passivity. That Leigh Hunt should come out to Italy to edit a new left-wing paper to which Byron would contribute was a reasonable project as it stood: Byron had been one of Leigh Hunt's visitors

when he was in prison (the prison where his cell had muslin curtains to the windows and flowers on the table in a jam-pot); Leigh Hunt was a capable editor with a certain following, and Byron's notoriety would ensure wide sales for any paper that could publish new work from his pen. But the matter did not end there: Leigh Hunt had an ailing and slovenly wife and six undisciplined children; Byron had an assorted menagerie and an undisciplined temper. Nothing could have been more surely doomed to failure than Shelley's plan for the Hunts to occupy a flat in Byron's palace.

That Byron should even have consented to the scheme shows the extent of Shelley's influence over him; the influence of the man who knows what he wants over the man who has no pivotal point in his life, no great friendship, no love; if he actually made the proposal, it must have been without an option and without gauging Shelley's capacity for going on—or Hunt's incapacity.<sup>1</sup>

But a mongrel misfortune, faintly ridiculous, dogged the Hunts' footsteps. They were to have embarked in September, but the vessel was delayed until November 16th, and what with illness and bad weather they did not finally arrive until the following June. Lord Byron was not a man to suffer the fools of fortune gladly, and the welcome extended to them when they arrived at Casa Lanfranchi had not been warmed or sweetened by nine months' keeping.

And Shelley, who had kept up with Byron for the sake of Allegra, kept up with him now for the sake of his friend. But

<sup>1</sup> Shelley to Leigh Hunt, Aug. 26th: '... He (Lord Byron) proposes that you should come and go shares with him and me in a periodical work, to be conducted here; in which each of the contracting parties should publish all their original compositions, and share the profits. He proposed it to Moore, but for some reason or other it was never brought to bear. There can be no doubt that the profits of any scheme in which you and Lord Byron engage, must from various, yet co-operating reasons, be very great. . . . I did not ask Lord Byron to assist me in sending a remittance for your journey; because there are men, however excellent, from whom we would never receive an obligation, in the worldly sense of the word; and I am as jealous for my friend as for myself.' Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 909.

he was anxious not to have more to do with him than he need, for the days of Diodati were seldom revived, and Byron's mannerisms and his *entourage* more and more sickened him. He was happier far with the Williamses and Trelawny, free to come and go as he would or to forgo talk altogether and lie on his back in the bottom of the boat, dreaming as he faced the heavens.

Edward John Trelawny had come to stay with the Williamses in the lower flat at Tre Palazzi; if his first encounter with Shelley was all amazement ('was it possible this mild-looking beardless boy could be the veritable monster at war with all the world?') and his first impression of Mary all admiration,<sup>1</sup> they, on their side, did not know what to make of him at all. In the fragment of a drama Shelley evidently had him in mind in the 'Pirate, a man of savage and noble nature',

<sup>2</sup>He was as is the sun in his fierce youth,  
As terrible and lovely as a tempest.

Mary, with no standards by which to judge him, knew that he had for her the attraction of a complete opposite, but she could not decide whether the attraction was good or bad. She was evidently trying to get her opinion of him clear in her own mind by describing him to Maria Gisborne:

... A kind of half-Arab Englishman, whose life has been as changeful as that of Anastasius, and who recounts the adventures as eloquently and as well as the imagined Greek. He is clever; for his

<sup>1</sup> Trelawny, *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron* (Oxford edition, p. 15): 'Such a rare pedigree of genius was enough to interest me in her, irrespective of her own merits as an authoress. The most striking feature in her face was her calm, grey eyes; she was rather under the English standard of woman's height, very fair and light-haired, witty, social, and animated in the society of friends, though mournful in solitude; like Shelley, though in a minor degree, she had the power of expressing her thoughts in varied and appropriate words, derived from familiarity with the works of our vigorous old writers. ...'

<sup>2</sup> 'Fragments of an Unfinished Drama', ll. 58-9.

moral qualities I am yet in the dark; he is a strange web which I am endeavouring to unravel. I would fain learn if generosity is united to impetuosity, probity of spirit to his assumption of singularity and independence. He is 6 feet high, raven black hair, which curls thickly and shortly, like a Moor's, dark gray expressive eyes, overhanging brows, upturned lips, and a smile which expresses good nature and kind-heartedness.

Time would test his quality; meanwhile he was not a Cornishman for nothing: 'We must all embark, all live aboard; we will all "suffer a sea-change".' Edward and Shelley must have a boat of their own; his friend Roberts would build her, and for the summer they would all live directly on the sea.

The boat and their plans for her would be discussed round the fire in the evenings, and when they were exhausted Jane would sing or play the piano. She could play the harp, too, but there was no instrument here. Shelley sent to England for a guitar, for he loved to listen to her, and as she sang or hummed a tune would compose the words of songs for her. Mary found her equally soothing, as though she possessed indeed the gift of healing power that Edward said the Indians attributed to her. Certainly she had a contenting influence on all of them; for, with no pretensions either of intellect or of emotion, she treated them neither to Tom's fustian nor to Claire's histrionics; she was content to be a good wife to Edward and a friend to them all.

Mary sometimes wished that she had been made like that herself; but she knew at the same time that, for all they cost her, she would not really give up the other sides of her nature. If her own literary ambitions made for complexity and difficulty, she would not relinquish them when she thought how they brought her Shelley's praise. It had been a very proud moment for her when she copied his letter to Ollier, recommending *Castruccio*;<sup>1</sup> she had not dared to believe he could really think so highly of it:

2. . . The character of Beatrice, the prophethess, can only be done

<sup>1</sup> It was published as *Valperga* in 1823 (see Appendix E).

<sup>2</sup> Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 915.

justice to in the very language of the author. I know nothing in Walter Scott's novels which at all approaches to the beauty and sublimity of this—creation, I may almost say, for it is perfectly original; and, although founded upon the ideas and manners of the age which is represented, is wholly without a similitude in any fiction I ever read. . . .

When Ollier did not accept the book she sent it to Godwin to negotiate and to keep the profits; it should bring in about £400 and so be a really useful contribution towards his debts and do something to relieve Shelley also from his perpetual claims. *Castruccio* had been hard work; when it was finished Mary marked a day in her Journal with a cross:

*November 29th.* I mark this day because I begin my Greek again, and that is a study that ever delights me.

But she also took advantage of her leisure to go about socially. She drove on most days with the Countess Guiccioli, who turned out to be 'a nice, pretty girl without pretensions, good hearted and amiable'—a somewhat unexpected successor to Lady Caroline Lamb and Lady Oxford. She also attended balls and other parties, and on several occasions tried the experiment of church-going—much to the scandal of old friends:

<sup>1</sup>So Hogg is shocked that, for good neighbourhood's sake, I visited the *piano di sotto*; let him reassure himself, since instead of a weekly, it was only a monthly visit; in fact, after going three times I stayed away until I heard he was going away. He preached against atheism, and, they said, against Shelley. As he invited me himself to come, this appeared to me very impertinent, so I wrote to him, to ask him whether he intended any personal allusion, but he denied the charge most entirely.

Those who profess and call themselves Christians have no monopoly of the Bible and the Liturgy, but superstition works both ways: the atheist will be as shocked at his friend going to church as the churchman will be shocked at his friend studying

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Mrs. Gisborne, Mar. 7th, 1822. Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 330.

'atheism'. Hogg's reaction here shows an attitude exactly similar to that of Moore when he warned Byron against his association with Shelley and Hunt.

The days were peaceful and happy, but Mary dared not believe that they could remain so; rather, she felt, the time must be a lull between storms. If her turn of mind inclined her to wait on troubles, she had, besides, an artist's sensitiveness to incongruity—an uncomfortable faculty for seeing the writing on the wall at the feast, or hearing the wolves through the music. It was after a ball at Mrs. Beauclerc's,<sup>1</sup> where there was everything to please an attractive young woman of twenty-four, that she wrote in her Journal:

<sup>2</sup>*Thursday, February 7th.* Read Homer, Tacitus, and Emile. Shelley and Edward depart for La Spezzia. Walk with Jane, and to the Opera with her in the evening. With E. Trelawny afterwards to Mrs. Beauclerc's ball. During a long, long evening in mixed society,<sup>a</sup> how often do one's sensations change, and, swiftly<sup>b</sup> as the west wind drives the shadows of clouds across the sunny hill or the waving corn, so swift do sensations<sup>c</sup> pass, painting<sup>d</sup>—yet, oh! not disfiguring—the serenity of the mind. It is then that life seems to weigh itself, and hosts of memories and imaginations, thrown into one scale, make<sup>e</sup> the other kick the beam. You remember what you have felt, what you have dreamt; yet you dwell on the shadowy side, and lost hopes and death, such as you have seen it, seem to cover all things with a funeral pall.

The time<sup>f</sup> that was, is, and will be, presses upon you, and, standing the centre of a moving circle, you 'slide giddily as the world reels'. You look to heaven, and would demand of the everlasting stars that the thoughts and passions which are your life may be as ever-living as they. You would demand of the blue empyrean that your mind might be as clear as it, and that the tears which gather in your eyes might be the shower that would drain from its profoundest depths the springs of weakness and sorrow. But where are the stars? Where the blue empyrean? A ceiling clouds that, and

<sup>1</sup> For later connexion with the Beauclerc family see p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. i, p. 322. Corrections from original Journal: (a) add 'dancing and music', (b) 'swift', (c) 'sentiments', (d) 'blotting' crossed out, 'painting' substituted, (e) 'makes', (f) 'Time'.

a thousand swift consuming lights supply the place of the eternal ones of heaven. The Enthusiast suppresses her tears, crushes her opening thoughts, and . . .

But all is changed; some word, some look excites the lagging blood, laughter dances in the eyes, and the spirits rise proportionably high.

The Queen is all for revels, her light heart,  
Unladen from the heaviness of state,  
Bestows itself upon delightfulness.

## V

MAY-JULY 1822



<sup>1</sup>Come then all of you, come closer, form a circle  
Join hands and make believe that joined  
Hands will keep away the wolves of water  
Who howl along our coast. And be it assumed  
That no one hears them among the talk and laughter.

THEY must all 'suffer a sea-change' at Spezzia in the summer: if Trelawny, now captain of Byron's yacht *Bolivar*, could not live with them, he could come over to sail; the Hunts would join them (Jane and Leigh Hunt could sing together at the piano), and if only Hogg and the Gisbornes would come out, too, life would be perfect! So Shelley planned with Williams: <sup>2</sup>'Our good cavaliers flock together, and as they do not like <sup>a</sup>*fetching a walk with the absurd womankind*,<sup>a</sup> Jane and I are off together, and talk morality and pluck violets by the way.' The two wives did not want to damp their ardour, though they did not care for all this boating, and Mary was also loath to undertake the trouble and expense of the move from Pisa. She was expecting another child, and was anxious this time to take her

<sup>1</sup> 'Wolves', Louis MacNeice. Quoted from *The Year's Poetry*, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Dowden, vol. ii, p. 467.

(a) This expression, which occurs also in Byron's letters, was first used by Monkbarns in Scott's *Antiquary*.

doctor's advice to keep quiet beforehand, so that she might not suffer afterwards from the low spirits that had followed the birth of Percy Florence. But if Shelley was happy and his health and that of the baby continued so good, she would be content. Claire was to come to them for a month, but she was not likely ever to be a permanent visitor again, for, thanks to Mrs. Mason, she had made a circle of friends for herself in Florence, and if she left there it would be to join her brother Charles in Vienna. In expectation of this she had written to Byron again asking to be allowed to see Allegra. While she was awaiting his answer she went on April 23rd with the Williamses to look for a house at Lerici on the Gulf of Spezzia.

Hardly had she set out than news came to Tre Palazzi that Allegra had died of typhus at the Convent. One thing they decided at once: they must not break the news to Claire while she was so near Byron, for they dreaded to what lengths her grief and resentment might drive her. For her own sake, as much as for his, she must be kept from him. No good could come of heaping reproaches upon him, and she might irretrievably harm herself by reviving in public a scandal that she was beginning to live down in her new life. The only thing to do was for Mary and Shelley to hasten their intended departure from Pisa and to take whatever house should be available on Spezzia, even though they had to share it with the Williamses.

On April 25th Claire and the Williamses returned.

<sup>1</sup>(*Williams's diary.*) Return to Pisa. Meet S., his face bespoke his feelings. C's child was dead, and he had the office to break it to her, or rather not to do so; but fearful of the news reaching her ears, to remove her instantly from this place.

Trelawny offered to escort them, and, with a weight of grief and apprehension at her heart for the ignorant mother with her, Mary set off with Percy Florence. Casa Magni was uncomfortably small and very dilapidated, quite unsuitable for

<sup>1</sup> The MS. of Williams's Diary is in the British Museum. It was edited by Richard Garnett and published in 1902.

sharing with another family; and when the Williamses came, with all their furniture, Claire saw the difficulty and offered to return to Florence. While the others were discussing in Jane's room what they should do, Claire broke in upon them, and from the look on their faces guessed what it was that they feared to tell her. Her first outburst of grief was terrible, but there was something in Claire's nature that made her rise to occasions, and, her first passion over, she settled down into a calm less of despair than of determined resignation. She could not be persuaded to stay on at Casa Magni, but insisted on returning to her work in Florence. Through Shelley she only asked from Byron that he would allow her a glimpse of the child's coffin on its way through to England, and a portrait with a 'lock of her hair, however small'.<sup>1</sup>

'This letter,' Shelley wrote to Byron, 'will, I fear, infect you as it has been infected, with the melancholy that reigns here.' Particularly to Mary the death of another child sharpened memories of that death-bed at Rome by which she was always haunted: <sup>2</sup>'an infant who cannot explain its pain and whose flickering life resembles the wasting flame of the watch light, "whose narrow fire is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge devouring darkness hovers"'. She could not shake herself free from acute depression, and the atmosphere of the place was charged with terror for her. The others did not feel it, and put down her forebodings to her state of health and the rush and anxiety of the move: only too well aware of the tendency to melancholy that she inherited, Mary tried to believe them and to rally herself into an unnatural cheerfulness.

But, as she was to write later to Maria Gisborne:

<sup>3</sup> . . . I was not well in body or mind. My nerves were wound up

<sup>1</sup> Allegra's body was buried in Harrow churchyard. A tablet to her memory was not admitted inside the Church. See *Allegra*, by Iris Origo, pp. 108-9. Byron 'acceded to this request, and a miniature portrait of Allegra remained with Clare to the day of her death'. From *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, Murray, vol. ii, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> From *The Last Man*. Quotation, *Cenci*, III. ii. 10-12.

<sup>3</sup> Aug. 15th, 1822. Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 11.

to the utmost irritation, and the sense of misfortune hung over my spirits. No words can tell you how I hated our house and the country about it. Shelley reproached me for this—his health was good, and the place was quite after his own heart. What could I answer? That the people were wild and hateful, that though the country was beautiful yet I liked a more *countrified* place, that there was great difficulty in living, that all our Tuscans would leave us, and that the very jargon of these *Genovesi* was disgusting. This was all I had to say, but no words could describe my feelings; the beauty of the woods made me weep and shudder; so vehement was my feeling of dislike that I used to rejoice when the winds and waves permitted me to go out in the boat, so that I was not obliged to take my usual walk among the shaded paths, alleys of vine-festooned trees—all that before I doated on, and that now weighed on me. . . .

To Shelley, Lerici was all delight; in the little schooner that Roberts had designed at Genoa he possessed what Edward called 'a perfect plaything for the summer'; the original intention that Byron should have a share in her had been abandoned, and Shelley had bought her outright for £80 and considered money never spent to better purpose. Williams shared his enthusiasm, and Trelawny, too, praised her, though he considered she carried rather too much sail: 'she was very crank in a breeze', and he advised them to take on as crew some local sailor.<sup>1</sup> But Williams, piqued at the suggestion of his inexperience, refused to take advice, and Shelley, with his utter disregard for danger at sea, did not insist. They only consented to keep on the boy, Charles Vivian, who had sailed round with her from Genoa.

One disfigurement marred their pleasure in her: Byron had called her the *Don Juan* and was so annoyed at the suggestion she should be renamed *Ariel* that he made Captain

<sup>1</sup> Roberts wrote to Trelawny: 'I have put Shelley to the expense of *iron* ballast; it was impossible to bring his boat down to her bearings with shingle, excepting I filled her half full—so I have put a-board 20 long pigs—weighing 28.  $\frac{1}{2}$ 's kintal at 6.  $\frac{1}{2}$ 's livres—that is a thing he can always sell again, therefore it is of no consequence.' (Kintal = Quintal = 100 Kilograms.) Boscombe MSS. A. Unpublished letter.

Roberts paint her first name on the mainsail.<sup>1</sup> Days were spent on the shore outside the villa in an effort to remove the letters, but turpentine, buccatta, and every other possible spirit failed to do more than render the sheet a hopeless daub. Trelawny may have warned them that it was considered unlucky to change the name of a boat, but, not to be beaten, the proud owners had the offending sheet taken out and a new one put in. 'Lord and poet as he is,' said Mary, 'he could not be allowed to make a coal-barge of our boat.'

On June 6th Mary's forebodings seemed to be realized: she had a dangerous miscarriage, and only Shelley's promptitude in procuring ice and insisting on placing her in it saved her life. The Saturday after, she had another shock:

2. . . In the middle of the night I was awake by hearing him [Shelley] scream and come rushing into my room; I was sure that he was asleep, and tried to waken him by calling on him, but he continued to scream, which inspired me with such a panic that I jumped out of bed and ran across the hall to Mrs. Williams' room, where I fell through weakness, though I was so frightened that I got up again immediately. She let me in, and Williams went to Shelley, who had been wakened by my getting out of bed—he said that he had not been asleep, and that it was a vision that he saw that had frightened him. But as he declared that he had not screamed, it was certainly a dream, and no waking vision. What had frightened him was this. He dreamt that, lying as he did in bed, Edward and Jane came in to him; they were in the most horrible condition; their bodies lacerated, their bones starting through their skin, their faces pale yet stained with blood; they could hardly walk, but Edward was the weakest, and Jane was supporting him. Edward said, 'Get up, Shelley, the sea is flooding the house, and it is all coming down.' Shelley got up, he thought, and went to his window that looked on the terrace and the sea, and thought he saw the sea rushing in. Suddenly his vision changed, and he saw the figure of himself strangling me; that had made him rush into my room, yet, fearful

<sup>1</sup> Professor Jones points out that the boat is always referred to by the Shelleys, Trelawny, and their contemporaries as the *Don Juan*.

<sup>2</sup> To Mrs. Gisborne, Aug. 15th, 1822. Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 11.

of frightening me, he dared not approach the bed, when my jumping out awoke him, or, as he phrased it, caused his vision to vanish. All this was frightful enough, and talking it over the next morning, he told me that he had many visions lately; he had seen the figure of himself, which met him as he walked on the terrace and said to him, 'How long do you mean to be content?' . . .

One of Shelley's visions is recorded by Williams in his *Journal*: they were talking together in the moonlight on the terrace overlooking the water, when Shelley stopped short, 'grasped me violently by the arm and stared steadfastly on the white surf that broke upon the beach under our feet. . . . He recovered after some time and declared that he saw, as plainly as he saw me, a naked child, Allegra, rise from the sea, and clap its hands as in joy, smiling at him.'

It was not surprising that the strain of breaking the news to Claire and the shock of the miscarriage wrought upon their nerves. The house was uncomfortably small for two families; even Shelley noticed that Jane pined for her own pots and pans. <sup>1</sup>'It is a pity that any one so pretty and amiable should be so selfish.' And there was, besides, the burden of Godwin's affairs: 'Mary has been very unwell', Shelley wrote to Claire, <sup>2</sup>'I suppose it will be necessary to make the Godwins a subject of conversation with her—at present I put off the evil day.'

But they had had troubles before; they would survive them. With the coming of the Hunts, their fortune would change.

They were at last due to arrive, and, distasteful as it was to see Byron again, Shelley decided that he must go to Leghorn to welcome them. He would sail over there with Edward and Charles Vivian. Mary agreed that he must go. She would have liked to go with him, for the company of her old friends would do her more good than anything; but it would be foolish to take any more risks with her health, and as a semi-invalid she would only be a burden to them. They could make the journey and be back the quicker without her.

<sup>1</sup> To Claire, May 29th, 1822. Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 973.

<sup>2</sup> May 31st, 1822. Ingpen, vol. ii, p. 974.

But when it came to parting she called him back; he must not go. She could not bear to be left; if he loved her, he would stay. Tenderly he took her in his arms and begged her to calm herself. No possible harm could come to him except from the knowledge that she was unhappy. He knew she did not mean it: this was just another of those hysterical fits she had had since the miscarriage and that she had promised him to do her best to overcome. Besides, wouldn't she want the Hunts to have a proper welcome? There was Marianne to be thought of—an invalid, promised by her doctors little more than a few months of life; what must not she be enduring with the anxieties of her six children in a strange place?

Percy Florence would take care of his mother; and Jane would be with her, and together they could lament over the lady who had borne their men away, for they were both jealous of the *Ariel*, were they not? He was surprised at her, she should be above such things.

So he rallied her, and for his sake she dried her eyes and urged him to be off. Edward and Roberts, she knew, were waiting. The parting would not be for long.

With a convulsive effort she restrained herself from calling out once more and begging him to stay, as she heard him make his way out with Edward towards the boat. She must control herself. He had promised her he would be back soon.

## VI

JULY-AUGUST 1822



Mary wrote laconically in the Journal on Sunday, July 7th:

I am ill most of this time. Ill and then convalescent. Roberts and Trelawny arrive with the Bolivar. On Monday June 16th, Trelawny goes on to Leghorn with her. Roberts remains here until July 1st when the Hunts being arrived—Shelley goes in boat with him and

Edward to Leghorn—they are still there. Read—Jacopo Ortis, and Vol. of *Geografica fisica* etc. etc.

Shelley had said that he would be back on Monday; it was now Friday, the 12th, and there was no sign of the *Ariel* in the bay. Jane was even more anxious than Mary, for Edward had promised her that if Shelley should be delayed by his friends he would return by felucca on Thursday evening at latest. Too impatient to wait for the post, which came at midday, she decided that she would be rowed over to Lerici for news. But the weather was too rough and the men refused to take her, so that she was still at home when the letters came. There was one from Leigh Hunt to Shelley; immediately apprehensive, Mary tore it open and read aloud,

Pray write to tell us how you got home, for they say that you had bad weather after you sailed on Monday, and we are anxious.

They had but one thought between them.

'Then it is all over!' cried Jane.

Mary would not hear the words said: nothing could be amiss, but the suspense was unbearable: only in activity could she still the voice of despair in her heart: if she stopped to listen to it she would admit its reality, and that she dared not do. She must keep her thoughts moving; her foreboding was senseless, and the presentiment of doom, unfounded as her fears so often were, results merely of her temperamental melancholy. They must do something at once: both get to Lerici and thence to Pisa to ask Hunt what he knew: if there was nothing to be heard there, they must go on to Trelawny and Roberts at Genoa. Any tidings, any action was better than guessing at the truth.

Their insistence would not take 'no' for an answer; the two women were rowed across to Lerici, from there they posted to Pisa, and at Casa Lanfranchi asked for Hunt. But he was in bed, and the Guicciolis' maid showed them straight up to Byron himself. Mary has left a graphic account of the whole nightmare chase in her letter to Mrs. Gisborne:

I staggered upstairs; the Guiccioli came to meet me, smiling, while I could hardly say, 'Where is he—Sapete alcuna cosa di Shelley?' They knew nothing; he had left Pisa on Sunday; on Monday he had sailed; there had been bad weather Monday afternoon. More they knew not. Both Lord Byron and the lady have told me since, that on that terrific evening I looked more like a ghost than a woman—light seemed to emanate from my features; my face was very white; I looked like marble. Alas! I had risen almost from a bed of sickness for this journey; I had travelled all day; it was now 12 at night, and we, refusing to rest, proceeded to Leghorn—not in despair—no, for then we must have died; but with sufficient hope to keep up the agitation of the spirits, which was all my life. It was past 2 in the morning when we arrived. They took us to the wrong inn; neither Trelawny nor Captain Roberts were there, nor did we exactly know where they were, so we were obliged to wait until daylight; we threw ourselves drest on our beds, and slept a little, but at 6 o'clock we went to one or two inns, to ask for one or the other of these gentlemen. We found Roberts at the 'Globe'. He came down to us with a face that seemed to tell us that the worst was true, and here we learned all that occurred during the week they had been absent from us, and under what circumstances they had departed on their return.

Trelawny, who found them with Roberts, would not let them despair; the boat must have been driven on to some strange coast, Corsica even, from which it would take time to get a message. They must go home; he would take them himself and then start off again to patrol the coast and get the guards to search and make inquiries:

<sup>2</sup> . . . Arriving at Lerici we were obliged to cross our little bay in a boat. San Terenzo was illuminated for a festa. What a scene! The waving sea, the sirocco wind, the lights of the town towards which we rowed, and our own desolate hearts, that coloured all with a shroud. We landed. Nothing had been heard of them. This was Saturday, July 13, and thus we waited until Thursday July 18,<sup>a</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Mrs. Gisborne, Aug. 15th, 1822. Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, pp. 16–17. This letter tells the whole story of the events.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

(a) Mrs. Marshall gives '18th', but according to Dowden, vol. ii, p. 528, Mary wrote '25th' (cp. below (a) 'twelve days'). She had lost count of time. The bodies were discovered on the 15th, see p. 170, note 1. MS. in Ashley Library not available.

thrown about by hope and fear. We sent messengers along the coast towards Genoa and to Via Reggio; nothing had been found more than the *Lancetta*; reports were brought us; we hoped; and yet to tell you all the agony we endured during those twelve days,<sup>a</sup> would be to make you conceive a universe of pain—each moment intolerable, and giving place to one still worse. . . .

By July 15th two bodies had been found washed ashore. Trelawny examined them: '... the tall, slight figure, the jacket, the volume of Sophocles in one pocket and Keats' poems in the other, doubled back as if the reader, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away, were all too familiar to me to leave a doubt in my mind that this mutilated corpse was any other than Shelley's.' The other body, that of the sailor-boy, was buried in the sand where it lay. Williams's corpse was found three miles distant from Via Reggio, near the tower of Migliarino, and identified by a boot and handkerchief.

Trelawny, who had not shirked being the messenger of evil tidings, now forced himself to dance patient attendance on officials and guards to get permission for disposing of the bodies of his friends. Edward's remains were to be taken to England, and Shelley's to Rome to lie beside those of William in the Protestant Cemetery, but by Italian quarantine law they must first be burnt.

<sup>2</sup>The beauty of the ceremony over which Trelawny presided

<sup>1</sup> Trelawny's *Recollections*. From a letter of Roberts to Byron, July 16th, it is clear that the bodies of Shelley and the boy were found on the 15th. Trelawny broke the news on the 19th. Bodleian Add. MSS. D. 5.

<sup>2</sup> This account is based on Trelawny's *Recollections* and *Records*. His biographer, Mr. H. J. Massingham, says: 'Trelawny has written no fewer than five different accounts of the burning of Shelley and Williams—one in the *Recollections*, a repetition of it in the *Records* with a few lines of insignificant addition, an Appendix to the *Records* and two British Museum manuscripts, one of which was republished by Buxton Forman in his edition of the *Letters* in 1910.' Trelawny supplied details of the scene to the French painter Gérôme (*Letters*, 268, 269). I have not been able to trace any picture of it painted by him, but there is in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, *The Funeral of Shelley*, by Louis Édouard Fournier in 1889, presented by Mr. William Moore. The Director, Mr. Frank Lambert, informs me that Fournier was born in Paris in 1857, and as a pupil of Cabanel at the

would have delighted Shelley in his life: the simple iron bier stood alone on the sun-baked foreshore where one sea-bird circled overhead under the blinding sun, the Apennines in the distance rising behind the pine-trees, and out to sea the islands of Gorgona, Capraja, and Elba. Wine and salt and frankincense Trelawny poured upon the brushwood, and as the flames leaped brilliantly to heaven plunged in his hand and tore the heart of Shelley from the bier.

École des Beaux-Arts may have come under the influence of Gérôme, who was also a professor there. There was a painful incident when Leigh Hunt who 'begged' Shelley's heart from Trelawny refused to give it up to Mary. 'In *his* case above all other human beings, no ordinary appearance of rights, even yours, can affect me.' (Letter to Mary, Aug. 17th, 1822, quoted from *Shelley and Keats*, edited by Edmund Blunden.) Hunt was later persuaded of Mary's 'rights' by Jane Williams.



PART 5  
'LIVING AFTER'  
1822-1840



*Ah, did you once see Shelley plain . . . .*  
*But you were living before that,*  
*And also you are living after.*

BROWNING: 'Memorabilia'.



# I

SEPTEMBER 1822—JULY 1823



**A**DONAIS is not Keats', it is his own elegy; he bids you there go to Rome', Mary had written to Maria Gisborne in the long letter of August 15th,<sup>1</sup> in which she described the events preceding the tragedy:

Well, here is my story—the last story I shall have to tell. All that might have been bright in my life is now despoiled. I shall live to improve myself, to take care of my child, and render myself worthy to join him. Soon my weary pilgrimage will begin. I rest now, but soon I must leave Italy, and then there is an end of all but despair. . . .

But Mary did not give in to despair; she rose above herself at this time, above the heritage of her father's self-pity and the deep melancholy of Mary Wollstonecraft, and she did not look back afterwards. Only twenty-five years old as she was, it was natural that, in letters to an older woman who was as much a mother as a friend to her, she should give vent to her feelings—'there are moments when the heart must *sfogare* or be suffocated'—but to other friends she does not make her grief a burden. To Jane Williams, travelling alone with her two babies over ground that she had lately passed so joyfully with her lover, she writes protectively, putting aside her own unhappiness to muster what words of comfort she can.<sup>2</sup> It is to the Journal that had been the daily record of their life together that in future she confides her loneliness:

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 'Lady Shelley showed me a number of letters from Mrs. Shelley to Mrs. Williams from Genoa, before her return to England, which she had recently bought from Mrs. Lonsdale's representatives. They are very interesting and highly honourable to Mary Shelley.' R. Garnett, *Letters about Shelley*, p. 210. For Mrs. Lonsdale (Prudentia Hogg) see p. 196, note 3. These letters are in Boscombe MSS. A, and quotations appear here from them.

<sup>1</sup>Now I am alone! ah, how alone! the stars may behold my tears, and the winds drink my sighs—but my thoughts are a sealed treasure which I can confide to none. <sup>a</sup>White paper—wilt thou be my confidant? I will trust thee fully, for none shall see what I write. . . .<sup>a</sup>

The Journal, as she measures the years in it, has outpourings of self-pity, regrets for the past and lack of hope for the future; but what is significant is, not that she had these thoughts, but that it was to her Journal and not to her friends that she confided them. That is the strength of her character as it developed after Shelley's death. In writing her poem, 'The Choice',<sup>2</sup> she seems to have accomplished a catharsis of her spirit by looking steadily at the events of her life as they led up, like scenes in a drama, to this catastrophe. For a turning-point it was: she recognized that she had often made Shelley unhappy by her melancholy, which, in the way of human nature, had more often taken the form of irritability and coldness than a romantic sadness; but she had enough faith in the reality of their love to be confident that he had understood and that it had not been impaired by trivial misunderstandings. There is no remorse, no repining, but a glad acceptance of all that had gone to make up their life together:

By all our best companionship I dare  
Call on thy sacred name without a fear.

Mary's poem was not written nor her words in letters to friends carefully chosen in any dignified or secluded leisure where grief could be a luxury; practical affairs intruded at once on the mourning at Casa Magni. The house had to be packed up, business arranged with Peacock, Shelley's executor, and immediate money found to send Jane home to England<sup>3</sup> and Claire to Vienna.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 40.    <sup>a</sup> MS. addition.

<sup>2</sup> In the Appendix I have reproduced 'The Choice' in full from the edition edited by the late Mr. H. Buxton Forman, 1876, with alterations from an earlier version in Boscombe MSS. A.

<sup>3</sup> Among other letters of introduction Mary provided one to Hogg. After much praise of Edward she says, 'I would say do all in your power to be of use

Trelawny was active in helping her, and by October Mary was settled at Genoa in a house with the Hunts while Byron lived farther off with La Guiccioli. Mary had welcomed this arrangement, as she did not want to be alone, and she had been deeply touched by Hunt's spontaneous kindness in offering to work for her and her boy ('I belong to those whom Shelley loves'). In helping Marianne with her family Mary thought she would find occupation to distract her mind, but she had not reckoned with Marianne's fecklessness; the household went from discomfort into squalor. And Hunt, for all his capacity for friendship and that charm which he exercised upon acquaintances, showed in the intimacy of a household rough corners that his excursions into political martyrdom had done nothing to smooth; and the children fully deserved Byron's name of Yahoos. The patience of their parents with them was compensated by their impatience with any one who tried to limit their depredations: 'they were not to be corrected until they were of an age to be reasoned with',<sup>1</sup> and Mary got scant sympathy if she interfered when they teased Percy Florence.

These conditions made it difficult for her to concentrate on editing the *Posthumous Poems*, and the only time that she had to herself, when she could retire to her own room, she was too exhausted to work—and too cold, for the stove, with a deliberate malevolence that overwrought nerves readily attribute to inanimate objects, was out of order. She wrote to Claire:

Hunt does not like me: it is both our faults and I do not blame him, but so it is. . . . The children are all well. So also is my Percy,

to her, but to know her is sufficient to make the desire of serving her arise in an unselfish mind. Do what little you can to amuse her.' Pisa, Sept. 9th, 1822. Unpublished letter, Boscombe MSS. S.

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes they even tried their parents sorely: 'A sad gap in my Journal! But I am very ill and cannot hold out long in this way; my nights are worse than my days. My thoughts are for ever upon the bad conduct and mean spirit evinced in John and Mary. Heaven grant they may alter and not tease their father when I am gone.' From Mrs. Leigh Hunt's Journal, Nov. 7th, 1822. Bodleian MSS.

poor little darling: they all scold him because he speaks loud *à l'Italian*. People love to, nay, they seem to exist on, finding fault with others, but I have no right to complain, and this unlucky stove is the sole source of all my *dispiacere*. . . .

Matters were not made any better by Byron. He was being kind enough to Mary, negotiating with Sir Timothy Shelley for her allowance and occasionally calling on her, but she did not want to try his kindness long. She wrote to Jane:

<sup>1</sup> . . . L. B. is to me as kind as ever; I hardly see him, *maneo male*; but he is all professions and politeness and in the only instance that I called on him for action [Sir Timothy Shelley] he complied with my request in the kindest and fullest manner. I do not suppose any miracle worked in my favour, or that his defect would not touch me if I touched it, but his purse strings are yet undrawn by me and will remain so, and that you know is the tender point. . . . He has done himself with T—ny and over-done himself with Roberts, on account of some *old clothes*, quite in the *auctioneering* taste and this defect of his grows and grows until his whole character is overshadowed by its virtue-killing shade.

He was not a man from whom it was pleasant to accept favours, as Shelley had known when for Hunt's sake he had tried to put *The Liberal* on a business basis; Shelley, who had found it was always as well to give Albè his title! Poor Claire—what she had paid for her moment of 'romance', and now poor Hunt! That the first issue of the paper had been received very coolly in England Byron took for a personal affront, and, terrified of the contagion of failure, wrote off to his friends to lay the blame on Hunt and to dissociate himself from him. Mary, unwisely enough, tried to intercede:

<sup>2</sup> I am induced to say a few words to your Lordship on this affair

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished letter, Boscombe MSS. A. From Albaro, about Oct. 1822. In another letter to Jane she tells her that Byron allowed her to send money to Claire when Mrs. Mason appealed for her. Mary had to pay it out of a few pounds she had earned from *The Liberal*.

<sup>2</sup> Mary to Byron, undated. From unpublished letters in the possession of Sir John Murray.

of Hunt's. I wish indeed that I could *say* them, as these things are always better said; but I will not venture on a second intrusion and dare not inflict upon you the pain of paying me a visit. . . . He is very much vexed that his nephew noticed those reports, but they are noticed, Murray may publish or give free circulation to your letter and that places him in a degrading point of view. For 'his wife and children' are alleged, not your friendship for him. . . . Consider that however Moore may laugh at Rimini-Piminy that Hunt is a very good man—Shelley was greatly attached to him on account of his integrity, and that really your letter *does* place him in an awkward situation. The Journal is now the work of charity—a kind of subscription for Hunt's family—this must hurt the work—do not you then think that a few words from you in explanation or excuse such as could appear are due to your literary companionship with him? It would be a good natured thing—and a prudent thing—since you would stop effectually the impertinence of Murray. . . .

To keep up the glamour of his reputation, Byron now began to play with the idea of going to Greece to take part in the War of Independence. What a contrast, in Mary's eyes, with the genuine and selfless patriotism of Mavrocordato, and how poor a showing he made, too, beside Trelawny! It was to him, *il giovane stravagante*, that she now turned more and more, for he alone seemed to have kept something of the spirit that had animated their circle while Shelley was alive. ('We saw sorrow in other faces, but we found help only from you!') She wondered how she could ever have been in doubt as to his quality, but was glad at least that, in their ignorance of what to make of him, she and Shelley had suspended judgement ('still we like him,—we believe him to be good'). Time had sifted the dross from the gold.

In the New Year (1823) Sir Timothy Shelley announced through Whitton to Byron that he would make no provision for Mary unless Percy Florence were handed over to his guardianship. This proposal she naturally refused to consider, and she determined to lose no more time in arranging her return to England and setting about earning a living there by her pen. |

<sup>1</sup> Jan. 23rd, 1823. Unpublished Boscombe MSS. S.

Her father had written kindly and offered to help her; it was only necessary to collect from Byron the money that he owed Shelley, and the day after Marianne's confinement Mary approached him. What followed is pungently described in her letter to Jane Williams:

'He declared he would regulate all himself. I waited in vain for these arrangements . . . he chose to transact our negotiation through Hunt, and gave such an air of unwillingness and sense of the obligation he conferred, as at last provoked Hunt to say that there was no obligation, since he owed me £1,000. "*Glad of a quarrel, straight I clap the door!*"'

Trelawny, returned from the Maremma and Rome, where he had planted trees by Shelley's grave, insisted on supplying the necessary money. She knew that he was none too well off and hesitated to take advantage of such generosity; but, with that fine tact that seemed to come naturally to him when the occasion demanded, he claimed it as a privilege to help her, out of love and loyalty to Shelley. To that there could be no answer but acceptance and an unexpressed gratitude that she could leave him to understand. On July 25th, Mary, with Percy Florence, started for England.

A week before, Byron, Trelawny, and Count Gamba (La Guiccioli's brother) had set sail for Greece.

<sup>2</sup>I did not see the former. His unconquerable avarice prevented his supplying me with money, and a remnant of shame caused him to avoid me. . . . If he were mean, Trelawny more than balanced the moral account. His whole conduct during his last stay here has impressed us all with an affectionate regard, and a perfect faith in the unalterable goodness of his heart. They sailed together; Lord Byron with £10,000, Trelawny with £50, and Lord Byron cowering before his eye for reasons you shall hear soon. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 80. In letters to Jane, Hogg expresses the hope that Mary will not be so 'unwise' as to return and refers to the 'cruel kindness' of Trelawny in providing funds, but he does not appear to have written advice to Mary herself. (a) Pope, *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, l. 67.

<sup>2</sup> To Jane Williams, July 23rd, 1823. Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 82.

## II

JULY-OCTOBER 1823



THE breach with the Hunts had been healed before she left, and Mary wrote letters to them from the stages of her journey that are easy and affectionate. 'Distance lends enchantment...'; and at Palazzi she wished they could all be together.

... We will have no servants, only we will give out all the needlework. Marianne shall make puddings and pies, to make up for the vegetables and meat which I shall boil and spoil. Thorny shall sweep the room, Mary make the beds, Johnny clean the kettles and pans, and then we will pop him into the many streams hereabouts, and so clean him. Swinny, being so quick, shall be our Mercury, Percy our gardener, Sylvan and Percy Florence our weeders, and Vincent our plaything; and then, to raise us above the vulgar, we will do all our work, keeping time to Hunt's symphonies. . . .

In Paris she stopped for a week with the Kenneys. Miss Curran, according to a letter from Jane, had returned to England in August; but the Horace Smiths were still there, and Louisa Holcroft, daughter of Godwin's old friend, who introduced her to Thomas Howard Payne, the indigent dramatist, author of 'Home, Sweet Home'. He afterwards proposed to Mary, but, on being refused, tried to make out that she had used him as a 'stalking-horse' for Washington Irving, whose friend, or rather hanger-on, he was.<sup>1</sup>

My father and William came for me to the Wharf. I had an

<sup>1</sup> Mary had plenty of opportunities to meet Irving without Payne's intervention. Her letters to Payne were privately printed by the Boston Bibliophile Society in 1910 (available at the British Museum) and a highly coloured account of the friendship, based on them, in *The Romantic Life of Shelley and its Sequel*, 1910, by Mr. Francis Gribble, author of *Rousseau and the Women he loved*, *The Love Affairs of Lord Byron*, &c., &c. The matter is dealt with at length and with the attention it deserves on pp. 286-8 of the second volume of the standard life of Washington Irving, by Stanley T. Williams (O.U.P., 1936).

excellent passage of 11½ hours—a glassy sea and a contrary wind—the smoke of our fire was wafted right aft and streamed out behind us—but wind was of little consequence, the tide was with us—and though the engine gave a ‘short uneasy motion’ to the vessel, the water was so smooth that no one on board was sick and Persino played about the deck in high glee. . . .<sup>1</sup>

1 On August 25th she arrived in London. Godwin’s new house,<sup>2</sup> 195 Strand, was smaller and less ramshackle than the old business premises in Skinner Street, and her father and Mamma made an effort to welcome and accommodate her, for which she was grateful; but she had to warn the Hunts to send her letters c/o the *Examiner* until she arrived,<sup>3</sup> . . . for I shall get them early the moment they come, but in my absence unless you write for Mrs. Godwin’s most certain and attentive perusal, do not send any letters there’. She intended to find rooms separately as soon as she could—if possible to share with Jane Williams—for she did not want to try Mamma’s patience long; and for all his present sympathy there was bound to be a certain reserve in her relations with Godwin, for neither could forget the tone of the later correspondence with Shelley. When they kept to impersonal topics—and his early training made this easy—all her old admiration for him returned and her delight in being with him. His appreciation of her literary success was generous, and he welcomed the new equality in their relationship, for *Valperga* had sold as well as *Frankenstein* and she was now a literary celebrity on her own account.<sup>4</sup> With that irony that so often steals the sweetness from success she had returned to England to find her first novel had been adapted to the stage.

<sup>1</sup> To Leigh Hunt, Sept. 9th, 1823. Unpublished Boscombe MSS. S.

<sup>2</sup> When Godwin was declared bankrupt and the firm of M. J. Godwin dissolved he continued at 195 Strand with the French and English Juvenile School Library.

<sup>3</sup> Dijon, Aug. 7th, 1823. Unpublished, from Bodleian Add. MSS. D. 5.

<sup>4</sup> To Trelawny, Mar. 1824, Mary wrote that during the debate on the slave trade ‘Canning paid a compliment to *Frankenstein* in a manner sufficiently pleasing to me’. Unpublished letter, Boscombe MSS. S.

<sup>1</sup> . . . But lo and behold! I found myself famous. 'Frankenstein' had prodigious success as a drama, and was about to be repeated, for the twenty-third night, at the English Opera House. . . . The story is not well managed, but Cooke played —'s part extremely well; his seeking, as it were, for support; his trying to grasp at the sounds he heard; all, indeed, he does was well imagined and executed. I was much amused, and it appeared to excite a breathless eagerness in the audience. It was a third piece, a scanty pit filled at half-price, and all stayed till it was over. They continue to play it even now. . . .

If the artist in her rejoiced, the woman's heart was the sadder that success could not be crowned by praise from the beloved. She had to devote herself to work and suppress that side of her nature, or indulge it in memories that only her Journal would see. She had plenty to do—Shelley's poems to be collected, and a novel of her own to finish. She had to smooth out, too, the quarrels of the Hunt brothers. 'John begins to despair', she writes to Marianne, asking her to hurry Leigh's contributions to the *Examiner* and the preface to the *Posthumous Poems* which the Hunt firm were to publish. 'It would break my heart if the book should appear without it.'

At her father's house she could meet his friends and stay talking to them now in his library for as long as she wanted. Hazlitt still came there, and the Lambs,<sup>2</sup> who, kindly as ever, invited the two young widows to their evening tea-parties and introduced them to 'our friends from Shacklewel Green', the Novello family; Basil Montagu took her to visit Barry Cornwall,<sup>3</sup> an invalid now, but charming and good-looking as ever 'with his beautifully formed head'. Washington Irving was also a

<sup>1</sup> To Leigh Hunt, Sept. 9th, 1823. Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 94. Cf. the following entry in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xciii, 1823, p. 74: Theatrical Register, July 26th. 'A melodrama, entitled "Presumption or the Fate of Frankenstein", founded on the romance of that name by Mrs. Shelley. The acting was excellent, though the piece was replete with too many horrors. However it was well received.'

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Charles Lamb*, edited E. V. Lucas (1935), vol. ii, p. 407. There is an unpublished letter from Mary to Mary Lamb, July 22nd, 1827.

<sup>3</sup> Bryan Waller Procter, the poet and dramatist. He married Basil Montagu's stepdaughter, Miss Skepper, in 1824.

frequent visitor, as he had undertaken to negotiate for Godwin with American publishers, and Coleridge came as he had come when Mary was a child. 'Seeing Coleridge last night reminded me forcibly of past times; his beautiful descriptions reminded me of Shelley's conversations.'

That he and Shelley might have met! Mary, now as later, hardly knew whether she missed Shelley more when she was alone or when she was with congenial spirits in whose company he, too, would have delighted.

(June 8th, 1824.)

<sup>1</sup> . . . I have been gay in company before but the inspiriting sentiment of the heart's peace I have not felt before tonight—and yet my own, never was I so entirely yours—in sorrow and grief I wish sometimes (how vainly) for earthly consolation at a period of pleasing excitement—I cling to your memory alone and you alone receive the overflowings of my heart. Beloved Shelley, Good night. . . .

1824 was 'the second year after 1822', and to meet old friends still required courage, but with Jane she went to see the Gisbornes, who more than anybody else recalled the lost, halcyon days.

'Tis thus the past on which my spirit leans  
Makes dear unto my heart Italian scenes.

(*'The Choice'*)

She was homesick for Italy and eager for news from the Hunts: <sup>2</sup> . . . and how goes on our "gallant bard" and his crowns and his helmets and his Bolivar canon and he who is worth all and a dozen times more, his companion?'

But when Trelawny wrote it was clear that the 'Pisa Circle' had widened to breaking-point. Tired of Byron's procrastinations, he had left him at Missolonghi<sup>3</sup> and gone into the interior

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished extract, Boscombe MSS. A. The years are recorded at the beginning of each Journal as they follow 1822.

<sup>2</sup> From unpublished Bodleian Add. MSS. D. 5. Byron had three helmets made of classical shape in gilt and with 'Crede Byron' inscribed on them.

<sup>3</sup> Trelawny married Tersitza, the sister of Odysseus, in April 1824 (his third marriage), and by her had a daughter, Zellâ. They were afterwards

to link his fortunes with Odysseus, the chieftain who had set up a rival faction against Mavrocordato:

1. . . I rather think Lord Byron is writing something. If any new works should come out on Greece, I should like to have them. Hunt could send them through Dunn of Leghorn. The Childe repented of his voyage before leaving Leghorn. Pride and shame have brought him as far as Cephalonia not without great difficulty. He now, perhaps, is struggling against his constitutional malady of avarice. To redeem his honour in the meantime he cries out aloud on the meanness, poverty, ingratitude and cruelty of the Greeks. . . .

### III

1824



ON the publication of Shelley's *Posthumous Poems* early in 1824<sup>2</sup> Sir Timothy threatened to stop the allowance of £100 per annum that he was making to Mary if any work of his son's or any biography of him were published during his lifetime. Mary had to accept the interdiction and withdraw the remaining copies from circulation. Fortunately three hundred copies had been sold, and names on the original subscription-list

divorced. Odysseus was captured and put to death by the Government party. Trelawny, who was left in charge of his citadel, was treacherously attacked by one of his companions, Fenton. 'After a two months' struggle between my constitution and those severe wounds in which I suffered daily death, the former triumphed, since which time I have been daily gaining strength', he wrote, 'with his left fin', in Oct. 1825.

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished passage from letter, Oct. 24th, 1823, Boscombe MSS. A.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Marshall says 'late in 1823', but the title-page of the first edition in the Ashley Library has '1824'. A 'remaindered' edition of poems published in his lifetime was issued in 1823 but independently of Mary. She helped, however, the editor of Galignani's edition of the poems of Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley in one volume with portraits, 1829. In 1839 Sir Timothy raised his ban with regard to the poems, and Mary most ingeniously introduced biographical material into her Notes on them. I am indebted for these particulars to the Editor's Preface to *Poems*, vol. i, Julian edition. The Introduction from Leigh Hunt did not come in time.

showed some promise that the neglect from which he had suffered in his life was to be amended; Barry Cornwall represented an older generation, and there was a foreshadowing of appreciation to come in the name of the young T. L. Beddoes.

Anxious to be independent, Mary considered writing a play. Shelley had always believed her to have dramatic talent and had wanted her to undertake *The Cenci* and *Charles I*, but her father was less encouraging. The fragments that she submitted to him have not been preserved, but from the judgements that he had passed on her novels we may conclude that his criticism was not unsound. He had written:

<sup>1</sup>*November 15th, 1822.* 'Frankenstein' was a fine thing; it was compressed, muscular, and firm; nothing relaxed and weak; no proud flesh. 'Castruccio' [*Valperga*] is a work of more genius; but it appears, in reading, that the first rule you prescribed to yourself was, I will let it be long. It contains the quantity of four volumes of 'Waverley'. No hard blow was ever hit with a woosack!—

and now he advised her:

<sup>2</sup>It is laziness, my dear Mary, that makes you wish to be a dramatist. It seems in prospect a short labour to write a play, and a long one to write a work consisting of volumes. . . . But as there is no royal road to geometry, so there is no idle and self-indulgent activity that leads to literary eminence. . . .

She certainly did feel an inertia and despondency that might be called laziness, and the novel that she was engaged upon hung heavily on hand. It was to be called *The Last Man*, and when she had begun it she had felt well able to describe the feelings of the solitary survivor of civilization—'the last relic of a beloved race, my companions extinct before me'—but as she went on she found that the very acuteness of her sympathies made them the more difficult to express. In the same way the character of Adrian that she was modelling on Shelley was not as successful as Lord Raymond who was drawn from Byron.

'Writing has become a task,' she confided to the Journal,

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

'my studies irksome; my life dreary. In this prison it is only in human intercourse that I can pretend to find consolation. . . .' But it was not easy for her to go out in society when she had to count every penny that she spent and could not always afford the bus fare to the Strand to see her father. She did not like to accept hospitality that she could not return, and she was humiliated that she could not keep up with the interests of those friends like the Novellos who were kind enough to ask her frequently to their homes; for theatres, concerts, the opera, and all that went to make up the life of a cultivated gentlewoman were beyond her means. That she did not go about much, she gave as her reason not her poverty (for she was too proud to admit her family's claims upon her that made it difficult for her to manage on her modest income) but the fact that in Kentish Town she lived too far out.

She would not have chosen to be anywhere else, for she wanted above everything to keep with Jane, so that they could treasure their memories together and recapture something of their youth and the best days that either of them could ever know. 'One should see no one or many', she had once written in her Journal, in a fit of exasperation with the communal life they had led in Italy, but Jane was an exception. With her she could gather up the threads of life and make them into a pattern for maturity.

That Jane did not fully share in such 'philosophising', Mary was well aware, but she did not want her to be different: her charm had always been in her simplicity, and Mary did not doubt that her grief was as inconsolable as her own.<sup>1</sup> To the

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Gisborne had written, soon after Jane's return to England, that Hogg was assiduous in his attentions to Jane. (*Shelley and Mary*.) Mary wrote to Marianne Hunt, Nov. 27th, 1823: '... By the bye, I must not forget to do away any false impression you may have received from Mrs. G.'s letter about him and Mrs. W. which was, I think, all a mistake. I see nothing in his manner beyond that interest which everyone must take in her, nor in her consciousness of anything beyond. She is totally free from every particle of coquetry, and the beautiful simplicity of her character which S. and I always admired, now displays itself in all its charms. . . .' Unpublished letter, Boscombe MSS. S. Cf. letter from Hogg to Jane, quoted page 195, note 2.

outward eye she might show little sign of it; indeed sorrow seemed to have enhanced her good looks; Godwin had been impressed ('a picturesque little woman who did not shed a tear') when she first called on him, and when Hogg met her he was lost in a frank admiration that Mary could not help thinking rather out of place; but such things made her state more pathetic, for what could admiring glances mean to her now? Like Mary's, her heart would never stir to love again. She felt the more protective in her affection; the poor girl had so little; Mary had her work and the bitter-sweet of one day vindicating her husband's fame.

. . . . .

'Byron is dead.' The words rang like a knell through the length and breadth of his native land, compelling an echo of mortality in the minds of young and old, rich and poor, who knew his name. And who did not? Those who had only watched the reflection of his meteor-course from afar equally with those who had known him face to face felt the news as something cataclysmic, and with the shock there came a universal sense of remorse for harsh judgement passed upon him, a quick revulsion of feeling that might be summed up in the words Mary wrote in her Journal:

Beauty sat on his countenance and power beamed from his eye. His faults being, for the most part, weakness, induced one readily to pardon them.

From their windows Mary and Jane watched the funeral procession as it wound slowly up Highgate Hill, bearing his body to the resting-place of his ancestors at Hucknall Torkard. They wondered what Trelawny would have to tell them about the end, for he must surely have returned to Missolonghi to be with him;<sup>1</sup> and wondered, too, what Claire would be feeling now. For Mary, his death softened her heart towards his memory so that she forgot the bad and remembered only the

<sup>1</sup> Actually Trelawny returned only after Byron's death. See *Records and Recollections*.

good: the days in the boat on Lake Lemano and the evening talks at Diodati (so vivid in her mind that she had never been able to hear his voice afterwards without waiting for Shelley's to come in answer), his appreciation of Shelley, and his first kindness to her in Genoa. If he had changed later she must make allowances for the natural irritability of his temper ('Albè, the dear, capricious, fascinating Albè'), and the trials it had undergone with the Hunt imbroglio. It was no wonder that he had found it irksome when he was longing to be off on his magnificent adventure to Greece; if she had admired Mavrocordato on the day that he came so proudly to say good-bye in the Pisa room where he had taught her Greek, how much more should she have admired Byron, called by no native patriotism, but by the pure love of antiquity and the cause of Freedom! She had wronged him if she had ever doubted it; to his death must be forgiven much.

Both women knew that in the passing before their eyes of the mortal remains of Byron there had gone, too, the last symbol of the life they had lived so fully in the companionship that Trelawny had called the 'Pisa Circle'.

My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar.

They turned back into their living-room—there was Percy Florence playing with his 'wife' Dina, and Edward beside them.<sup>1</sup> For the sake of these they must force themselves to look forward and not backward to the place where their dead hopes lay.

'Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together'; even in his death Byron was not to find dignity for long. In July, Tom Medwin wrote to Mary:

2. . . How do you think I have been employing myself? With writing; and the subject I have chosen has been *Memoirs of Lord Byron*. Every one here has been disappointed in the extreme by the destruction of his private biography, and have urged me to give the

<sup>1</sup> Dina married Henry Sylvan Leigh Hunt. Edward was found employment by Peacock at Somerset House. I am indebted for these particulars to Miss Sylvia Norman's *After Shelley*.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, pp. 124-5.

world the little I know of him. . . . They tell me it is highly interesting, and there is at this moment a longing after and impatience to know something about the most extraordinary man of the age that must give my book a considerable success. . . .

He wanted her to supply him with further anecdotes, assuring her, 'Shelley I have made a very prominent being in the work, and I think you will be pleased with that part, at least, of the Memoirs and all the favourable sentiments of Lord Byron concerning him', but Mary knew Tom Medwin and declined to have anything to do with his book.<sup>1</sup> She wrote to Marianne Hunt about it:

Have you heard of Medwin's book? Notes of conversations which he had with Lord Byron (when tipsy); every one is to be in it; every one will be angry. He wanted me to have a hand in it, but I declined. Years ago, when a man died, the worms ate him; now a new set of worms feed on the carcase of the scandal he leaves behind him, and grow fat upon the world's love of tittle-tattle. I will not be numbered among them. . . .

#### IV

1825-1827



AFTER 1825 Mary's material prospects became brighter, for *The Last Man*<sup>2</sup> was successful and Peacock had secured for her another £100 a year from Sir Timothy. She was the more grateful to him for his conscientiousness in the negotiations because

<sup>1</sup> Oct. 10th, 1824. Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 127. Medwin afterwards offered to suppress the book for an 'indemnity'. Mary refused to reply and wrote to Leigh Hunt an account of the affair, ending: '... Who knows how many whom the wretch with what he calls his "slashing" may inflict misery upon.' The book was published by Colburn in 1824 as 'Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron . . . in the years 1821 and 1822'.

<sup>2</sup> Published by Henry Colburn, 1826. See fragment of poem (Appendix D) dedicating *The Last Man* to Jane.

she felt that he did not really like her; he had written coldly on Shelley's death and in England he seemed to avoid her.<sup>1</sup> Nor had she seen much of Hogg, but he now wrote to her kindly on the publication of *The Last Man*: 'the character of Adrian is most happy and most just'. Appreciation always touched her, for her confidence in herself needed constant reassurance, and to be told that her attempt to draw a portrait of Shelley was not a failure was the best praise she could have had. Evidently the man of the world had kept more of the spirit of the young rebel who had defied Oxford for the sake of Shelley than she imagined.

She tried to be unselfish and to hope that his attachment to Jane would be rewarded—if he could be content, that is, with what she had to give him, for Jane still protested that she could never love again. The days of *Political Justice* and *Queen Mab* were far away; marriage without love no longer seemed the one thing worse than love with marriage ('fetters of tyrannic law'), and Mary now recognized that Jane soon tired of another woman's company and appreciated the admiration she aroused in the opposite sex more than she would admit. Early in their life together at Kentish Town, Mary had realized that her affection was not fully returned ('I love her and my purest pleasure is derived from that source—a capacious basin, and but a rill flows into it'), but it was only after a holiday they spent together that she saw quite how little she meant to her:

<sup>2</sup>*Journal. September 5th, 1826.* A month of peace—a whole month of happiness with my dearest friend at Brighton—and I have lived to hear her thank God that it is over. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Cf. letter to Byron undated (late 1822?) from Casa Negreto (unpublished letters in possession of Sir John Murray): '... This is all my news except that both my father and Jane say that Peacock does not appear lukewarm but assiduous in my affairs. . . .' Peacock seems to have done his best as executor, but there was a certain antipathy between Mary and him. Sir Percy Shelley in a memorandum about Peacock and the Separation question wrote: 'His [Peacock's] declaration in my hearing that he hated Mary because she contradicted him and loved Harriet who had never done so—yet his professions of friendship to Mary (*whom he hated*) were very great, addressing her always as his "very dear friend"'.  
<sup>2</sup> Unpublished passage, Boscombe MSS. A.

Jane was made for the domesticities ('*large cupboards for small responsibilities*'), and she pined for a husband on whom to lavish her devotion; in the circumstances 'Blue-bags', as Claire called him, would probably make her happy.

Mary wished that Claire herself would come to a decision as prudent; but though she was evidently still very attractive and enjoyed the stimulation of masculine society she had no intention of marrying. Her letters from Moscow, lively and intelligent, showed her at her best, and Mary could not but admire her courage and cheerfulness; for she knew what her mother had had to put up with as a governess, and Claire was much farther from home and had little consolation in her pupils:

2... If they fall into their father's or mother's way, and are troublesome, they are whipped; but the instant they are with me, which is pretty nearly all the day, they give way to all their violence and love of mischief, because they are not afraid of my mild disposition. They go on just like people in a public-house, abusing one another with the most horrid names and fighting; if I separate them, then they roll on the ground, shrieking that I have broken their arm, or pretend to fall into convulsions, and I am such a fool I am frightened. In short, I never saw the evil spirit so plainly developed. What is worse, I cannot seriously be angry with them, for I do not know how they can be otherwise with the education they receive. . . .

Mary often dreamed of a union between Claire and Trelawny; there was a certain foreign element in both of them, Claire with her dark looks and Trelawny, whom she had marked out from the first as 'half Arab', with the lingering Phoenician strain of the Cornish. She knew that he had been in love with her and had actually proposed to her in Italy, but apparently Claire had no mind to be at the mercy of the Pirate's vagaries.<sup>3</sup> Having

<sup>1</sup> 'The Wife Speaks.' *Satirical Poems*, C. Day Lewis.

<sup>2</sup> To Jane Williams, quoted without date by Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 161.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 202: '... He likes a turbid and troubled life, I a quiet one; he is full of fine feelings and has no principles, I am full of fine principles but never had a feeling; he receives all his impressions through his heart, I through my head. *Que voulez-vous? Le moyen de se rencontrer* when

something in her own nature of his wilfulness she must understand him better than Mary ever could; for Mary admitted that she herself veered between attraction, intensified by her gratitude to him, and a complete distaste for certain aspects of his character—the philandering and filibustering, which were at the moment to the fore. How much was a pose and how much went deep into his nature she could not decide; but she believed that once he gave a promise he would remain faithful to it, and she would have thought that Claire, who could understand him so well, would keep him true to the best in himself.

But if she put a novelist's happy ending to the love-stories of her friends Mary confined her own day-dreams to her Journal, and those who met her and admired her in society had no idea of her loneliness at heart. She wanted still the ideal companionship that she had sought as a girl in a 'great friendship'. It was to have been with Isabel Baxter then;<sup>1</sup> that it was to be of a different kind now she would not admit, although she comes near to it in a passage of the Journal that refers to the love-affairs of the 'great friend' who was to take Jane's place, Julia Robinson:

<sup>2</sup>September 25th, 1827. Arundel.

. . . But now my desire is so innocent. Why may I not hover a good genius round my lovely friend's path? It is my destiny, it would seem to form rather the ties of friendship than love—the grand evil that results from this is—that while the power of mutual Love is in itself a mighty destiny—friendship though true, yields to the adverse gale—and the vessels are divided far which ought never to part company. . . .

one is bound for the North Pole and the other for the South? . . . ' Claire to Mary, March 28th, 1830. Mrs. Gisborne in 1832 wrote to Mary of Claire: 'How much suffering she might have been spared if she had married Peacock!' I have not found a suggestion anywhere else that this was ever contemplated.

<sup>1</sup> She harks back to this when unhappy in the Hunt household. Unpublished entry, Mar. 17th, 1823. 'Isabel, Friend of my youth, whom I have sometimes thought might now step upon the vacant scene and that we might both support each other; can you not hear and pity me?'

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished passage from Journal, Boscombe MSS. A.

The 'literary light', the authoress of *Frankenstein* and *The Last Man*, was better-looking and more attractive than she had been as a girl of seventeen when Shelley loved her, and in his death she had lost not only the poet but her husband.

<sup>1</sup>What woman with a ghostly lover  
Can hold a mirror to her hair?

It is human frailty to want to re-create life in its old image, and Mary, however little she would admit it, hoped for love again, and, less idealistically, considered at times also the benefits of a marriage that might give her the security she lacked.<sup>2</sup> But when it came to the point she could never accept another man in Shelley's place: 'the wisest and best have loved me': there could be no successor. That is the test of the quality of her love for Shelley: not her loyalty to his memory—for loyalty like gratitude is a bastard virtue that dishonours both its parents—but her appreciation of his uniqueness.

She recognized that the thoughts that she sometimes confided to her Journal were not worthy of her:

<sup>3</sup>It has struck me what a very imperfect picture (only *no one* will ever see it) these querulous pages afford of *me*. This arises from their being the record of my feelings, and not of my imagination . . . my imagination, my Kubla Khan, 'my pleasure dome' occasionally pushed aside by misery but at the first opportunity her beaming face peeped in and the weight of deadly woe was lightened (2nd December 1834.)

Her forebodings of evil were not always unjustified. <sup>4</sup>'How dark—how very dark the future seems—I shrink in fear from the mere imagination of coming time', she wrote on Septem-

<sup>1</sup> *The Ghost*, W. H. Davies.

<sup>2</sup> In her letters Mary often adopted a tone of emotional *badinage* that was open to misconstruction. Cp. letter on marriage with Trelawny, page 219; the correspondence with Payne about Washington Irving (page 181, note 1); and the letters that she wrote later in life to the Italian exile, Gatteschi, whose unwisdom she evidently recognized herself, as she reclaimed and destroyed them. (See note on Knox, page 242.)

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished extract from Journal, Boscombe MSS. A.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

ber 25th at Arundel. 'Is any evil about to approach me? Have I not suffered enough?' Two months later the blow had fallen.

<sup>1</sup>*London, December 5th.* I am alone in London—and very unhappy. I have lost one friend and am divided from another. I weep much and cannot be consoled.

Mary had unselfishly welcomed Jane's union with Hogg, never suspecting that it would be the signal for her to prove false. That she had been unfaithful to Edward's memory less than a year after his death, Mary was never to know;<sup>2</sup> it was blow enough that in vulgar tittle-tattle she was falsifying all the events of their life together in Italy, sparing nothing to regale her new husband and his friends with ridicule of Mary and misrepresentations of Shelley's attachment to herself. Shelley's songs, his gifts, were all offered up to make good stories for the entertainment of his former friend.

Mary did not want her repentance, she did not want her love again; they were not worth having; but she felt a pang for the affection that she and Shelley had lavished upon any one so worthless; it was ironical that they should be served so ill who tried to love their fellow men so well. Trelawny, who had seen through Byron before they did, had been right also about Jane<sup>3</sup> and had never been attracted by a man who liked to 'taste as much happiness as is consistent with discretion'.

<sup>4</sup>... A Man [he wrote of Hogg to Mary], so repellingly cold and distant in his rudeness, that in the short time I could have for the attainment of such a herculean object as the becoming intimate with him, which I certainly had had not the slightest reason to believe,

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished extract from Journal, Boscombe MSS. A.

<sup>2</sup> On April 17th, 1823, Hogg was writing to Jane: 'How I long dearest Jane, to add a few more chapters to our secret history and surprising adventures and to taste once more as much happiness as is consistent with discretion.' Unpublished letter, Boscombe MSS. A.

<sup>3</sup> 'You may remember I always selected as my companion Edward, not Jane, and that I always dissented from your general voice of her being perfection.' Nov. 1822, *Letters*, p. 27. But when Mary had become a 'conventional slave' to the later Trelawny, Hogg became a 'grossly ill-used able man'.

<sup>4</sup> From an unpublished letter to Mary, Boscombe MSS. A.

he either wished or permitted, for it seemed to me an age would hardly have sufficed to have established myself on good terms with such an icy man—the utmost that I thought would be achieved, was that there was a possibility, that our acquaintance might beget an intimacy between our children, that the good understanding with them, might ripen under auspicious circumstances to a friendship between our respective grandchildren. . . .

He had not been enthusiastic about the union: 'I whistle them down the wind a prey to fortune!'

But Trelawny was too far away for confidences now, and she could not burden her letters to him with her troubles. It was finally through the advice of Tom Moore that she wrote to Jane:

<sup>1</sup> . . . Do not ask me, I beseech you, a detail of the revelations made to me. Some of those most painful you made to several; others, of less import, but which tended more, perhaps, than the more important to show that you loved me not, were made only to two. . . .

Jane's ready tears at once put Mary at a disadvantage, for she had all the shrewdness of a shallow nature and tried to save herself by reproaching Mary for harshness; but Mary, unaware of much of her duplicity as she still was, saw through this and determined to ignore tears and protests alike, in order to ensure that her tongue should be stopped.

<sup>2</sup>The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief  
To him that bears the strong offence's cross.

She could promise forgiveness; her stronger character even made her feel a pity that still had a sort of genuine love in it for the weakness of the other, and to outward appearances the friendship continued. She wrote with the old protectiveness to Mrs. Gisborne before the birth of Prudentia: <sup>3</sup>'Jane would

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Jane (*circa* Feb. 12th, 1828), quoted by Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, pp. 186-7. An omitted passage shows that it was Isabel [presumably Robinson] who made the 'revelation'. Boscombe MSS. S.      <sup>2</sup> Shakespeare, Sonnet 34.

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished letters, Boscombe MSS. S. Prudentia Hogg married first Thomas Jones Arnold, a London magistrate, and secondly James John Lonsdale, Recorder of Folkestone. She died in 1897.

be well, but that over activity and the want of a sofa (which Jeff cannot afford) threaten to make her suffer as she did with her last. I preach and pray but to little purpose. . . .<sup>1</sup> She stood godmother to the child, and her letters to Jane continued to be affectionate, but frequent references in her Journal hark back to a betrayal that had hurt her to the quick; she had borne blows that were heavier, but none so bitter.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*. November 23rd, 1833. I am copying Shelley's letters. Great God, what a thing is life! In one of them he says, 'the curse of this life is that what we have once known we cannot cease to know . . .'. Life is not all ill till we wish to forget. Jane first inspired me with that miserable feeling, staining past years as she did—taking the sweetness from memory and giving it instead a serpent's tooth.

But, if friends were unkind and memories overcast, in her son Mary's hopes were not doomed to disappointment. Percy Florence grew apace in England, and since he had become heir to the baronetcy on the death of Harriet's son Charles, in 1826, Mary hoped that, when the time came, his grandfather would make it possible for him to attend a public school. 'It was his father's wish that his son should be brought up at one.'<sup>2</sup> He was strong and healthy, with an intelligence above the average, and in an early love for drawing and painting showed signs of an artistic sensibility inherited from his father. But his equable temperament seemed to mark him out more for talent than genius. His mother wrote to Mrs. Gisborne in 1834:

. . . He is not all you say; he has no ambition, and his talents are not so transcendent as you appear to imagine; but he is a fine, spirited, clever boy, and I think promises good things; . . .

In his mother's eyes it was better so; if Shelley had not had genius, if he had not been a rebel, would he not still have been

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished extract from *Journal*. Boscombe MSS. A.

<sup>2</sup> Mary to Mrs. Gisborne, Oct. 30th, 1834. Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 261. Unpublished letters, Boscombe MSS. S, show that he first went to school at a Mr. Seaton's in Kensington and sometimes saw Sir Timothy.

with her, and their other children also? It had been worth while; she accepted it and was thankful for what she had been allowed to enjoy; but if she had to choose for another, a mother for her son, she did not doubt but that she would choose an easier way.

## V

1827

(MOORE 1827-1841)



WHEN Crabb Robinson was organizing his Copyright petition to Congress he wrote to Wordsworth:

<sup>1</sup>Only three writers of note refused to subscribe—Mrs. Shelley because she had never asked a favour of any-one and never would, Lord Brougham and W.

There is evidence of this same super-sensitive pride in Mary's relations with Caroline Norton, the brilliant granddaughter of Sheridan, of whom she wrote to Trelawny:

... I do not wonder at your not being able to deny yourself the pleasure of Mrs. Norton's society. I never saw a woman I thought so fascinating. ...

... Now do not in your usual silly way show her what I say. She is, despite all her talents and sweetness, a London lady. She would quiz me—not, perhaps, to you—well do I know the London *ton*—but to every one else—in her prettiest manner.

Mary was probably not far out in her judgement: when Mrs. Norton was gay (and she had considerable resilience of character) she had little time to spare for the older woman, and could even forget to invite her to contribute to *The Keepsake* when she took over the editorship, but when she was in trouble she knew that Mary Shelley's was a sympathy she could rely upon. 'I tell you this because I know you have a real wish to know',

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, vol. i, p. 348, Dec. 11th, 1837.

she wrote to her, in a frenzied little note that is the only confession of her attempt to seize her children by force when her husband refused to allow her to see them. 'I *failed*. I saw them all; carried Brin to the gate—couldn't open it—and was afraid they would tear *him* in pieces, they caught him so fiercely, and the elder one was so frightened he did not follow.'

When Mary approached her directly to use her influence with Melbourne to continue Godwin's pension to his widow, she showed kindness enough, and her advice has a delicious shrewdness:

2. . . Press *not* on the politics of Mr. Godwin (for God knows how much gratitude for that ever survives), but on his *celebrity*, the widow's *age* and *ill health*, and (if your proud little spirit will bear it) on your own *toils*; . . .

. . . As to petitioning, no one dislikes begging more than I do, especially when one begs for what seems mere justice; but I have long observed that though people will resist *claims* (however just), they like to do *favours*. Therefore, when I beg, I am a crawling lizard, a humble toad, a brown snake in cold weather, or any other simile most feebly *rampante*—the reverse to *rampant*, which would be the natural attitude for petitioning,—but which must never be assumed except in the poodle style, standing with one's paws bent to catch the bits of bread on one's nose.<sup>a</sup>

Forgive my jesting; upon my honour I feel sincerely anxious for your anxiety, and sad enough on my own affairs, but Irish blood *will* dance. . . .

Perhaps because her 'proud little spirit' felt that it had something to give as well as to receive in the relationship, it was with Tom Moore that Mary established the warmest friendship among the literary celebrities that she met. In May 1824 Moore had written in his diary,<sup>3</sup> 'With Kenney a little after 10. Mrs., Shelley very gentle and feminine . . .'. But the friendship did

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by J. G. Perkins in *The Life of Mrs. Norton*; original letters in Boscombe MSS. A.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 276. (a) A drawing is made here in the original.

<sup>3</sup> From *Memoirs, Journal, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, edited and abridged from the first edition by Lord John Russell, 1860.

not develop until they met again at the Exhibition on 25 June 1827, when Mary recorded:

I have just made acquaintance with Tom Moore. He reminds me delightfully of the past, and I like him much. There is something warm and genuine in his feelings and manner which is very attractive, and redeems him from the sin of worldliness with which he has been charged.

And Moore wrote:

<sup>1</sup>Went to the Exhibition to meet Mrs. Shelley; a good deal of talk about Lord B. and Shelley. Seems to have known Byron [thoroughly, and always winds up her account of his bad traits with 'but still he was very nice'.

He improved the shining hour by immediately getting Mary to persuade Teresa Guiccioli to provide an 'Istoria' for his forthcoming *Life of Byron*, and when it arrived (<sup>2</sup>'I should like to print it entire but suppose I must not') he asks her to acknowledge it for him.

By 1828 he was a close enough friend to be her confidant over Jane Williams, and by the end of 1829 was writing to her and calling on her frequently to discuss the Biography. Murray wished to put her co-operation on a business basis, but Mary would not hear of it:

<sup>3</sup>. . . I could not consent that an act of civility on my part to Mr. Moore should be brought forward as cancelling my debt to you. Besides, it would make me break a vow I made, never to make money of my acquaintance with Lord Byron. His ghost would certainly come and taunt me if I did. . . .

<sup>1</sup> From *Memoirs of Thomas Moore*.

<sup>2</sup> From series of Notes, Sept. 13th, 1827-June 25th, 1828, in a collection of eighty-five hitherto unpublished letters to Mary from Moore, Boscombe MSS. A. The extracts that follow are all from these.

<sup>3</sup> Nov. 12th, 1829. *Memoirs and Correspondence of the late John Murray*, by Samuel Smiles, vol. ii, p. 311. A hitherto unpublished letter in the British Museum, in answer to a request for notes on Byron's adventures as they are reflected in the poems, is given in Appendix C. It identifies the 'heroines' of the poems and throws interesting light on the manner of Byron's composition.

The following extracts from Moore's letters over the years 1827 to 1841 provide a complete record of their personal friendship and the course of his biography of Byron—with a good deal of light on Moore's personality:

Richmond, Sept. 3rd. 1829.

I have since I saw you made two (or rather three) runs up to town without being able to reach you—though I went last time armed with a host of queries for you that would of itself have reached Somerset Street. I am now deep in the Lake of Geneva, and only hope I shan't meet with the same fate I once invented for William Bankes who, in a memorable speech of his, stopt short at a simile about the Lake of Geneva and sat down. Have you heard (said I, in my rhymes)

How this wisest of young Gentlemen  
Fell, one night, by mistake  
In Geneva's deep lake  
And never was heard of again?  
Master Bankes, etc. etc.

I find Shelley not so easily dealt with as I expected—such men are not to be dispatched in a sentence. But you must leave me to manage it my own way—I must do with him, as with Byron, blink nothing (nothing, that is but what is ineffable) bring what I think *shadows* fairly forward, but in such close juxtaposition with the *lights* that the latter will carry the day. This is the way to do such men real service. I have been reading a good deal of Shelley's poetry, but it is, I confess (always excepting some of the minor gems) *beyond* me, in every sense of the word. As Dante says (and by the bye, the quotation will not be a bad one to apply to him) 'E col suo lume sè medesimo cela!'<sup>1</sup>

On Saturday (this is to give notice) I leave Richmond for good and for—19, Bury Street. Mrs. Moore and her little etceteras will stay a week at Lady Donegalls and then set off for Wiltshire, leaving

<sup>1</sup> *Purg.* xvii. 57. Cf. 'blasted with excess of light' (Gray: *The Progress of Poesy*), and Shelley on Coleridge (*Letter to Maria Gisborne*):

... the pure

Intense irradiation of a mind

Which, with its own internal lightnings blind . . .

me in the hands of the Printer's Devil for God knows how long.  
So, prepare for a surfeit of me.

Yours ever most truly,

THOS. MOORE.

I wish Hunt had not quoted your pretty passage about Shelley in your Preface to the Poems—but it will bear repetition.

When Moore went to sit to Sir Thomas Lawrence for the portrait that Murray had commissioned for his famous drawing-room, Mary often accompanied him, for she knew Lawrence through her father; she also went with Moore to visit his son at school.

(1828. *October 7th.*) . . . Drove to the Charter House, to see dear Tom, who came to me with his bare head all feathered with snow. Mrs. Shelley's admiration of him; said she could have sworn he was the image of his mother; 'there was all the woman in his face, particularly at the rise of the cheek near the eyes'.

But no friend of Moore's was intimate enough to have the privilege of criticizing his work; in a letter to Mary after the publication of the first volume of his *Byron*, there is a typical example of his touchiness:

Sloperton, January 24th, 1830.

. . . I did not answer your letter about Lawrence because though feeling our loss (the *general* loss) most sincerely, I knew I must fall far short of your emotion on the subject and therefore did not like to disappoint you. I had already, too, a little before, been deprived of one of my oldest and most real friends, who, though but a simple and unpretending-minded woman, had more value in my eyes than all the geniuses with whom I am acquainted.

I am glad you like Byron—but shall not answer your criticisms for fear you should give me more of them; for you know (or at least, *ought* to know) that there is nothing so fidgetting to me as these little nibbling details after the whole thing's despatched and the fools bolt shot irrevocably. It is bad enough to run the gauntlet of the *public* criticisms without having also little snug *private* ones. It is like a man being scolded by his wife at home besides being bullied abroad. I will only say that with respect of the religious

part I had a very difficult part to play, and, in my own opinion, have so managed it that there is not a thought or judgement expressed there that is not sincerely and thoroughly my own. I profess no creed in it nor do I blame any man for not having one; but I dwell on what I think the *dangers* of being without a religion and condemn (not nearly so strongly as I feel) the worse than larceny and felony as I consider it, of those who try to filch away the beliefs and hopes of others. In this, too, I am at least consistent as the letter which I told you Shelley wrote to H. Smith nearly ten years ago will prove. . . . Alluding to some expostulations of mine to Byron on the subject he says,

'I do not agree with Moore that Christian religion is an advantage (or useful or some such phrase) to mankind.'

There are, by the way, some things on this subject (connected with the education of Allegra) in B's letters to Hoppner, which though important, in the worlds view of such matters, to Byron, I don't think you would like to appear. . . . We shall, however, consult about it.

I shall stay down here as long as I can, but as the Murray is impatient for the 2nd. Vol. I fear I shall be obliged to come up in a week or so. Pray take [care] of yourself—keep clear of the law—don't wet your feet, and *don't* write criticisms.

Yours most truly, T. MOORE.

By all accounts, my Book is doing very well—but I am (as you will divine from the foregoing) still in a twitter about it.

And he is disappointed that his attempts, with Mary's help, to square the critics have been unsuccessful:

April 3rd, 1830.

What a trick Bowring has played me after all! I could have sworn (such are my innocent notions of such persons) that I was for ever more safe from abuse in his hands—and then asking me so kindly to his party! Bad as my 'Aristocratic' acquaintances are, the worst of them would hardly have put a man in the situation of accepting their hospitality while they had a horse pistol in the house ready to fire after him downstairs. This is not the way to make me regret the sphere of society I have chosen for myself.

Campbell too! My revenge *ought* to be, perhaps, to restore all

I have suppressed about him—'Cankered Carle', etc. etc. But I won't—he has done fine things and—I forgive him.

Their friendship continued when the book was finished; Moore, always a little rushed, found time to attend a soirée that Mary gave, though not, apparently, with complete success.

June 17th 1830.

... I was by no means tired of your party, but as nobody (out of your own fairy circle) seemed to care much about hearing me, I thought I might as well be off—particularly as I wished to look in at Lady Jersey's before it was too late.

Ever yours, T. M.

When he came less to London he continued to write to her from Sloperton; he described his triumphal tour in Ireland, 'almost beyond what Poet could describe and certainly far beyond what any Poet ever deserved', and apologized for having taken to writing for periodicals, which was to bring him in £500 a year:<sup>1</sup> 'I should be laughed at if I refused and though I know I shall be equally laughed at for accepting, it is at least the best side of the joke for *me*, who, accordingly gave in. . . .'

In 1834 he complains of failing eyesight: 'I often say I know not which are the more precious things, a pretty woman's eyes or a poor author's. *You* who have tried them in both capacities can best decide.' He tried to find her a tutor for Percy Florence near Sloperton in 1837 and provided an introduction to Lord Lansdowne. His notes, for whose shortness and shabbiness he had earlier apologized ('if any one were to ask me what sort of man Mr. Moore is, I would answer "as little like a note I have of his as possible"'), gave place to a letter when Mary applied to him for a copy of *Queen Mab*.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Godwin. Mary's letter to Murray, May 4th, 1832: '... Nearly all our literati have found but one resource in this—which is in the ample scope afforded by periodicals. A kind of literary pride has prevented my father from mingling in these; . . .' Smiles, *John Murray*, vol. ii, p. 328.

<sup>1</sup>Sloperton, Dec. 13th 1838.

It is very kind of you, as well as *like yourself*, to think that Shelley *must* have sent me a copy of his original Queen Mab. But, alas, he never did—and the fact is (whatever people who knew no better may have sometimes thought of me) none of the great guns of our modern Parnassus, Shelley, Wordsworth, Southey, and so forth, have ever acknowledged or admitted *me* as a legitimate brother—and in this, I have a strong suspicion they are not much mistaken. However, I must only sing, like Audrey, <sup>2</sup>(The Gods give us joy for our sluttishness) and make the best I can of it. I am, however, very, very sorry that I have not the book to send you.

Eight days I staid in town, the whole of which was devoted to Paternoster Row and Co.—it was my intention after having despatched that region to devote a few more days to seeing friends, and you among others. But the fiend, Influenza, laid hold of me (the first time I have ever really felt what it was) and I was but able to get down here and get to bed; and it was not till within these two or three days that I have been allowed to go out for a little air. The still depressing effects of the malady must account for this stupid letter, but I am not the less,

Yours truly and cordially,

THOMAS MOORE.

The last letter in the correspondence is dated February 21st, 1841.

<sup>1</sup> Moore refers to this letter in his diary (Jan. 18th–19th, 1839): 'In answering that I was unluckily *not* one of them, I added, in a laughing way, that I had never been much in repute with certain great guns of Parnassus, such as Wordsworth, Southey, her own Shelley, &c. Received from her, in consequence, a very kind and flattering reply, in which she says, "I cannot help writing one word to say how mistaken you are. Shelley was too true a poet not to feel your unrivalled merits, especially in the department of poetry peculiarly your own,—songs and short poems instinct with the intense principle of life and love. Such, your unspeakably beautiful poems to Nea; such, how many others! One of the first things I remember with Shelley was his repeating to me one of your *gems* with enthusiasm. In short, be assured that as genius is the best judge of genius, those poems of yours which you yourself would value most, were admired by *none* so much as Shelley. You know me far too well not to know I speak the exact truth."'

(a) *As You Like It*, III. iii. 42–3, misquoted.

Sloperton, February 21st, 1841.

I am rejoiced to hear something again of you, having been puzzled by your long silence, and even now am left in the dark as to where you have been. As to me, I have been to that region which Rabelais calls Oudamothy or No-where (Percy will put the word in Greek characters for you) but I think of sporting my hoary locks in London about the beginning of March and hope I shall be lucky enough to find *you* there.

We had a good deal of alarm about our boy, Rupert, (to whom you were so kind) as he was seized soon after his landing with the fever of the country—but our last accounts left him quite well again. The Aucklands immediately on his landing, made him their guest at Government House, so that he was lucky for himself in good quarters.

Yours ever most truly,  
THOMAS MOORE.

## VI

1828

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IN her thirties Mary Shelley had changed little from the young woman described by the Novellos' daughter on her first return from Italy:

¹ "I looked upon her with ceaseless admiration for her personal graces as well as for her literary distinction. Her well shaped golden head, almost always a little bent and drooping—her marble white shoulders and arms statuesquely visible in the perfectly plain black velvet dress which the custom of that time allowed to be cut low . . . her thoughtful earnest eyes; the short upper lip and intellectually curved mouth, with a certain close compressed and decisive expression while she listened and a relaxation into fuller redness and mobility when speaking; her exquisitely formed, white, dimpled small hands, with rosy palms, and plumply commencing fingers, that tapered into tips as slender as those of a Vandyke portrait . . .

¹ *Recollections of Writers*, Mary Cowden Clarke, p. 38.

Any suggestion of the statuesque in her appearance or any reserve in her manner was compensated by her animation when she was at ease. Thornton Hunt compared her to the well-known 'antique bust sometimes called Isis and sometimes Clytie', but 'it falls short of her, for it gives no idea of her tall and intellectual forehead, nor has it any trace of the bright, animated and sweet expression that so often lighted up her face'.¹ She was evidently much sought after; but, too much of an individual to be at home in a community, in the life that she made for herself in London she did not become a member of any one literary coterie nor of a political party.

Some feminists who had hoped that she would follow more in her mother's footsteps were disappointed, and the long entry in her Journal for March 8th, 1831, is evidently an *apologia* to such critics. It is written with a deliberation that suggests that it was not intended for her own eye alone, but the occasional asperity, as in the following passage, evidently decided Mrs. Marshall not to publish it in full:

2. . . If I had raved and ranted about what I did not understand—had I accepted a set of opinions and propaganda with enthusiasm; had I been careless of attack, and eager for notoriety; then the party to which I belonged had gathered round me, and I had not been alone. . . . *But since I lost Shelley I have no wish to ally myself to the Radicals—they are full of repulsion to me—violent without any sense of Justice—selfish in the extreme—talking without knowledge—rude, envious and insolent—I wish to have nothing to do with them.^a . . .

One feminist who became a personal friend was Frances

¹ 'Shelley—by one who knew him.' *Atlantic Monthly*, Feb. 1863.

² Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, pp. 319 seqq. (a) Unpublished passage, Journal, Boscombe MSS. A. Cf. reference to Liberals over Moxon prosecution, page 224, note 1. Also cf. letter to John Murray (undated) from unpublished letters in the possession of Sir John Murray. 'I feel particularly kindly towards the Conservatives just now as they have behaved with the greatest consideration towards my father—preserving him in his place, which was about to be abolished by the Whigs and that with a *manner* as gracious as the *deed*. The Duke of Wellington and above all the Prince of our orators, Sir Robert Peel, deserves my gratitude and has it.'

Wright,¹ who wrote to her through Robert Dale Owen in 1827. A remarkable woman of Scottish parentage, her expatriation in America had imbued her with the somewhat egregious enthusiasms of that continent, and on account of the many agitations with which she was associated she was considered a 'crank' and never received the credit she deserved for the part that she played in the early movement for the abolition of slavery. It was probably through her enthusiasm that a small lecture-tour in Paris was arranged for Mary in 1828, when she most unfortunately fell ill with smallpox on arrival.

Without belonging to a party, Mary, on the fringe of politics, was brought into contact with interesting personalities and events of the day through the Beauclerc family (Mrs. Beauclerc she had known in Pisa), the Pauls, and the Hares.² Her friend Rosa Robinson married Sir Charles Goring, an event on which Claire's comment, 'a strange match as he is not young and is only marrying for her to look after his children . . . it is a great

¹ See references to Miss Frances Wright in Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, chap. xxi, and in *D.N.B.* under her married name of Darusmont. An unpublished letter to Mary from Mrs. Boinville on the death of Godwin in 1836 says that she 'has made great friends with Fanny Wright'. Boscombe MSS. A.

² Sir John Dean Paul, second Baronet, married first, Oct. 10th, 1826, Georgina, third daughter of Charles George Beauclerc, and had a son, Aubrey, third Baronet. Sir John's bank (Snow, Paul & Co.) failed in 1855, and he and his partners were charged with embezzlement and condemned to fourteen years' transportation. He was reputed to be of the highest religious principles and had published several religious works. A couplet of the time ran:

Paul, Strachan, and Bate
Hard is their fate.

The Beauclercs were connected with the Gorings. Aubrey William Beauclerc of Ardglass, M.P. for co. Down, married first Ida, third daughter of Sir Charles Forster Goring, and secondly Rosa, daughter of Joshua Robinson (see below).

Sir Charles Goring's successor, Sir Harry Dent Goring, married Augusta Harvey in 1827 and divorced her in 1841. This was the Augusta Goring who married Trelawny.

Joshua Robinson had four children: Julian, who was at Cambridge with Percy Florence Shelley; Julia (married and went abroad); Isabella, afterwards Mrs. Sholto Douglas and mother-in-law of Sir Henry Drummond Wolfe; Rosa.

load off your shoulders', suggests that the Godwin household was not alone among those helped by Mary's slender resources.

After 1831 Mary's improved means allowed her to go about more with these friends:

February 14th. At the Opera again—heard David who had so delighted me at Milan and Naples—his voice has lost some of its mellowness—but his style is perfect.

I went last Sunday with Paul and Gee to hear Mr. Benson in the Temple Church—he is the only preacher I ever liked.

June 9th. Julia and I went to Ascot—we were a good deal amused—to a party tonight at the Speakers.

¹September 9th. I was at the coronation of William 4 yesterday on the 2nd bench of the Earl Marshall's box—the best in the Abbey. It was a splendid spectacle yet not to be compared to the ceremonies at Rome—except for the beauty of some of the women, the Duchess of Richmond in particular,—and the gentlemanliness of the D. of Devonshire, Ld. Brougham was a very droll figure with his coronet over his wig. They were so stingy the poor King was obliged to poke with his pen—and the D. of D. to tilt the inkstand—to get out enough to write his name.

In the literary world she was also on the fringe of the set that met in John Murray's famous drawing-room in Albemarle Street. The great publisher, although he had refused *Frankenstein* and had not continued the negotiations for the copyright of Shelley's poems in 1827,² became, through Moore, a generous friend to Mary and on several occasions advanced her money. Through him she met editors of periodicals to which she contributed. In *The Keepsake*, under Fred Reynolds's editorship, there appeared in 1829, besides her own short stories,³ several of Shelley's poems: 'Summer and Winter', 'The Tower of Famine', 'The Aziola', and the prose piece 'On Love'. 'Sadak the Wanderer' had been supplied in 1828 to Harrison Ains-

¹ Unpublished passage from Boscombe MSS. A.

² Murray had written to Sir Timothy Shelley for the copyrights, and Shelley had answered that they were hers, in January 1827.

³ Collected 1891, in *The Treasure House of Tales by Great Authors*. Professor Jones has identified several poems by Mary Shelley in the 1831 *Keepsake*.

worth, who preceded Reynolds in the editorship. When he first came to London he had written to his friend James Crossley, in Manchester: '... Little Charles Lamb sends me constant invitations. I met Mrs. Shelley at his house the other evening. She is very handsome. I am going to the theatre with her some evening.'¹

She frequently went to the breakfasts that Samuel Rogers gave in his house overlooking the Green Park. 'They are delightful,' she wrote.² 'Of such intellectual, fascinating society I have had too little in my day—how highly I enjoy them when they fall to my share.'

To Abraham Hayward, who was Mrs. Murray's gastronomic adviser, Mary wrote in connexion with his *Art of Dining*, confessing to being an 'Ignorama'.

³... In my father's house we might eat, but were never allowed to talk of eating. Shelley had no dislike of seeing women eat (with moderation) but he thought it a blot on Julie's character to be *gourmande*, and was himself so very abstemious that I could never exert more cookery for him than making a pudding. . . .

Lytton, whom Mary tried to persuade to accept articles on Italy from Claire when he was editor of the *New Monthly*, seems to have exercised over her that charm which obscured the literary judgement of other contemporaries, for she wrote in her Journal:⁴

January 11th, 1831. I have been reading with much increased

¹ In the *Times Literary Supplement*, May 6th, 1936, Mr. Davidson Cooke identifies the 'unrecognized piece by Shelley' in the 1828 *Keepsake* as 'Sadak the Wanderer', at pp. 117-19. The theme is akin to that of *The Wandering Jew*, always a favourite with Shelley. Letter to Crossley, Mar. 25th, 1825, from same article.

² Unpublished entry, June 30th, 1838. See anecdote about Talleyrand under Journal, vol. v, in Appendix B.

³ From *At John Murray's*, p. 68.

⁴ Unpublished passage from Journal. Cf. Hogg's letter to Lady Shelley, 1857, from unpublished Boscombe MSS. A, Appendix C: 'I go on slowly, O so slowly! with *The Last Days of Pompeii*; say you have read it through to encourage me. Liberal or Conservative; chosen or rejected—Knight, Baronet or Esquire; Lytton Bulwer, or Bulwer Lytton; it is always the same thing; self-conceit the most insufferable!'

admiration 'Paul Clifford'. It is a wonderful and sublime book. What will Bulwer become? The first author of the age? I do not doubt it. He is a magnificent writer.

This judgement may be compared with that of George Gillan in his *Literary Portraits*, 1856, who ranked Mary Shelley below her husband but on a par with Godwin, and of Godwin wrote:

After the majority of the writings of Dickens have perished, after one-half of Bulwer and one-fourth of Scott's Novels have been forgotten, shall some reflective spirits be found following the fugitive steps of Caleb Williams.

As a writer Mary definitely belonged to a 'school', as contemporary critics recognized—sometimes with horror, for Godwinism was considered strong meat for babes and stronger for an English lady,¹ but to any one who met her, the authoress was as unlike the woman as 'the monster at war with all the world' had been unlike Shelley. Leigh Hunt had said to the *Novel-lo*: '... But do not let any one consider Mary S. in the light of a Blue, of which she has a great horror, but as an unaffected person with her faults and good qualities like the rest of us.' And Lord Dillon (who should have satisfied even Trelawny's standard of the unconventional) meeting her in 1829, at the beginning of an acquaintance that was to develop into a warm friendship, wrote:

³You have puzzled me very much. Women always feel flattered when they are told they have puzzled people. I will tell you what has puzzled me. Your writings and your manner are not in accordance. I should have thought of you—if I had only read you—that you were a sort of my Sybil, outpouringly enthusiastic, rather

¹ See extracts from Reviews, Appendix E.

² Cf. his description of her in 'Blue Stocking Revels' (1837):

And Shelley, four-famed—for her parents, her lord,
And the poor lone impossible monster abhorred.
(So sleek and so smiling she came, people stared,
To think such fair clay should so darkly have dared.)

³ Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 197.

indiscreet, and even extravagant; but you are cool, quiet, and feminine to the last degree—I mean in delicacy of manner and expression. Explain this to me.

The friendships of these years are evidence both of the many facets of her character and of its development: still sensitive (she refuses to sit for a portrait from which Finden can make an engraving for Murray), her correspondence shows that she has left a long way behind the girl trying to be 'business-like' at Marlow or depending on Byron and Peacock to negotiate for her with Sir Timothy. Occasionally a feminine querulousness, that bears out the 'irritable, scarcely irascible' of Lavater's early prophecy, breaks through her reserve, as when she asks Murray to discount for her a bill from Colburn: 'As if I could do anything with a Bill! . . . Before he paid me in a gentlemanly way with a cheque—I mean as a gentleman should pay a *woman*. I dare say gentlemen have Bills among one another.' But in general she is serious and equable enough as she writes in terms of easy familiarity to the leaders of her world of letters; negotiating with Murray for her father,² with Bowring³ and other editors and publishers for Shelley, with Marryat⁴ and Lytton for Claire. In these later personal relationships she shows that she has learnt one of the first lessons of maturity, accepting people as they are and not asking of them more than they have to give.

¹ Jan. 23rd, 1830. From unpublished letter in Sir John Murray's possession.

² Letter to Murray. Smiles, vol. ii, p. 238.

³ Sir John Bowring, editor of the *Westminster Review* founded by Jeremy Bentham in 1824; a talented man and a keen Radical, he became in later years, according to Macfarlane, something of a 'Club bore'.

⁴ Frederick Marryat was editor of the *Metropolitan*, 1832–5, and published in it as serials several of his best novels. In an unpublished letter to Trelawny (1832?) from Somerset Street, Mary says: ' . . . I send you Claire's article with Mr. Bulwer's note. Her article is excellent and perfectly well adapted I should think for a magazine. I have an idea that Lady Blessington is the person who is furnishing them with articles on Italy—and compared with Claire's they must be poor. Do let Marryat see them; and make him be pleased with them—print them in the No. for November and desire more.' In a PS. she adds, 'Perhaps if Mr. M. knew the New Monthly were bringing out a series of articles on Italy, he might be eager for rival ones for the *Metropolitan*.'

VII

1828

(TRELAWNY 1828-1878)



THE smallpox to which Mary fell victim in Paris in 1828 was fortunately not a severe attack. ¹ '... The Parisians were very amiable, and, a monster to look at as I was, I tried to be agreeable, to compensate to them.' Julia Robinson nursed her, and returned with her to Sandgate in July, as ² '... my physician told me that sea-bathing will diminish by at least a month the period of my ugliness—you would not know me', Mary wrote to Jane.

But good spirits succeeded the illness and made up for the temporary disfigurement, which would have been a severe trial to any woman's vanity in a year when she was about to meet again two companions of happier days: friends she had not seen since they separated in Italy six years before—Claire and Trelawny.

Claire's visit was chiefly remarkable for a forced loan that Mary had to make to her brother, Charles Clairmont, and to which he referred years afterwards in a letter from Vienna.

³ '... The bitterness of the circumstances under which I left England in 1829 you will, of course, remember placed me under the necessity of asking a favour of you which your own circumstances made it difficult for you to grant; you, however, overcame

¹ Journal, July 8th. Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 188.

² Unpublished letter, Boscombe MSS. A.

³ Nov. 8th, 1845, 31 Landhaus Gasse, Vienna. Unpublished letter from Boscombe MSS. A. From unpublished letters between Godwin and Campbell (Boscombe MSS. A.), it appears that Godwin tried to get an appointment for his stepson at the new London University. Campbell replied that it was 'open competition'. Hogg tried also to secure an appointment through Brougham.

your repugnance and though I most punctiliously fulfilled all the obligations the nature of a mercantile transaction so rigidly requires, yet I have always entertained the impression, that the having in some measure *compelled* you to a step against the grain, has been the occasion of considerable coldness on your side. . . .

With Trelawny we will anticipate and follow the story of his relationship with Mary to the end, or almost the end, for there is the sorry aftermath of the *Records* published twenty-six years after her death. Up to this time their correspondence had been frequent; a strange exchange of experiences: adventures for gossip, affrays for society, physical wounds for the blows of friends' disloyalty.

Now that he was returning home he wrote to her that he had not changed:

¹ . . . Time has not quenched the fire of my nature; my feelings and passions burn fierce as ever, and will till they have consumed me. ² I wear the burnished livery of the sun.

To whom am I a neighbour? and near whom? I dwell amongst tame and civilised human beings. . . .

But when he came, his predominant mood was depression, due largely, no doubt, to 'the slow and wasting fever that has long been under-mining my health and sapping my strength'; and he writes to Mary from the West Country:

Royal Hotel, Plymouth, July 26, 1828.

² Dear Mary,

I have been obliged to be here at this time and in a few days to go on to Cornwall. . . .

Here I am, Mary, returned to the country of my birth after sixteen years absence and under what changes in my lot? The retrospection presents nothing but pain, disappointment and sorrow; but it is in vain lamenting. Amidst other griefs nothing has weighed heavier

¹ Letter to Mary, July 8th, 1828. *Letters*, p. 111. (a) Cf. *Merchant of Venice*, II. i. 2.

² Unpublished letter from Boscombe MSS. A.

on my heart than finding my sweet Alethea, not as I left her in Genoa beautiful, blooming, and full of life, heart on her lips and heaven in her eye; but faded, alas—drooping; her lips pale as marble, and her eyes dim with the shadows of death. You know her father was ruined; his wife and two daughters returned here to their native place. . . . Thus it is all I love perish. . . .

Dear Mary, I should have written before but this melancholy topic dwells continually on my mind, and I do not wish to bore you with my wailings; but I can no longer forbear to write to thank you for your letter, and to reassure you of my most unaltered affection.

Your

E. J. T.

He writes to her again from Trewithen:

¹ . . . After paying visits to various kith and kin of mine at or near Plymouth, I came on here to my uncle, Sir Christopher Hawkins; from hence I go to St. Michael's Mount—Sir John St. Aubyns. It is possible that I may be obliged to go to Paris, the 25th of September. But I hope not. I was obliged to offer my services to attend my mother there; but I will not say more till we meet, on so unpleasant a topic.

In the same letter he says:

² . . . I trust Jane is contented with her lot; if she is, she has an advantage over most of us. Death and Time have made sad havoc amongst my old friends here; they are never idle, and yet we go on as if they concerned us not, and thus dream our lives away till we wake no more, and then our bodies are thrown into a hole in the earth, like a dead dog's, that infects the atmosphere, and the void is filled up, and we are forgotten.

Can such things be, and overcome us like a summer cloud, without our special wonder? . . .²

¹ Unpublished passage from Boscombe MSS. A. Cf. reference to his mother in unpublished passage of letter, July 19th, 1831 (*Letters*, p. 170): 'My dear Mary. My aunt and yourself are literally and truly the only people I correspond with in England. I have no correspondence or communication with my Mother. She has used me ill and my repugnance to profess love to those who have done me wrong, is unconquerable.' From accounts of his childhood, Trelawny had little reason for affection towards his parents.

² *Letters*, p. 114. (a) *Macbeth*, III. iv. 110-12.

There is a cryptic reference to a visit which he ultimately paid to Mary at Sandgate in a letter she wrote to Fred Reynolds:

¹Dear Fred—Mary thanks you for the cash—and tell Mr. Heath that I am much obliged to him for sending it me so soon. They wanted a page of my story in the proof—I should like to have corrected that also—as it was the *last* and the most likely to be incorrect in the manuscript.

I have taken your advice and Miss Trelawny is paying me a visit—to make assurance doubly sure her father has accompanied her—to be sure he stays only a few days.

As to the question you ask me, after reminding you that friendship is but a name, I add also with the Poet, 'And love is still an emptier sound', if it makes you thin. You find it worse than I do—for I am not thin.

Adieu, I write in haste,
Yours truly, M. S.

The uneasiness of their friendship comes out in a later Journal entry (1832):

(Sandgate, June, July, Aug., Sept.)

²More than three months I spend at this place—Julia Trelawny was with me most of the time and also her father who has returned from Italy. He is a strange yet wonderful being—endued with genius—great force of character and power of feeling—but destroyed by *being nothing*—destroyed by envy and internal dissatisfaction. At first he was so gloomy that he destroyed me—this wore off somewhat—yet I never feel comfortable with him—in *soggezione* as the Italians call it.

But to return to 1829: impatient to be abroad again, Trelawny was in Italy by February:

³. . . Come away, dear Mary, from the horrible climate you are in; life is not endurable where you are.

Florence is very gay, and a weight was taken from my mind, and body too, in getting on this side of the Alps. Heaven and hell cannot be very much more dissimilar. . . .

¹ Unpublished, British Museum MS. 27925.

² Unpublished, from Journal in Boscombe MSS. A.

³ To Mary, March 11th, 1829. *Letters*, p. 116 seq.

In the same letter he tells her that, spurred on by Brown and Landor, he is writing his own life and wants her to provide material for his 'tribute to the memory of Shelley'.

. . . I always wished you to do this, Mary: if you will not, as of the living I love him and you best, incompetent as I am, I must do my best to show him to the world as I found him. Do you approve of this? Will you aid in it? without which it cannot be done. Will you give documents? Will you write anecdotes? or—be explicit on this, dear—give me your opinion; if you in the least dislike it, say so, and there is an end of it; if on the contrary, set about doing it without loss of time. . . .

His anger at her refusal may be considered the first ominous creaking in the chain of their friendship. He wrote furiously to Claire:

¹ . . . Mary has written me a letter which I have just received,—with a good deal of mawkish cant—as to her love of retirement—opinion of the world—and a deal of namby-pamby stuff—as different from her real character and sentiments as Hell is from Helicon. . . .

Nor to Mary did he mince his words:

² Dear Mary,—You never told me if old Major Bacon [?] called on you for his MS. Your remissness in writing makes me equally so such is the effect of example—besides I am anything but satisfied with your reply to my request—regarding Shelley—and I must say your reasons for not doing so—are most unsatisfactory—mere evasion—had Shelley's *detractor* and your very good *friend* Tom Moore—made the request, I feel confident he would not have been so fobbed off—as is proved by your having aided him in Byron's memoirs—of which I shall speak in my Life, what I think I say and shall not hesitate to write.

After what I told you in England of Medwin's goings on you will

¹ To Claire, July 3rd, 1829. *Letters*, p. 125.

² Unpublished letter. Poste Restante, Florence, Oct. 20th, 1829. In the rest of it he tells her he straightened out the affairs of Mrs. Medwin, who had sent for him in Medwin's absence to advise her about the bills creditors were presenting. He told her plainly that Medwin had run through her fortune of £10,000 and that his own story of having £800 per annum was a lie. Boscombe MSS. A.

not be surprised at any folly or villainy he may have committed. You used to like and laud him and thought me rash and violent in asserting him to be a coward, a liar, and a scoundrel—nevertheless he has proved himself all these. Be the judge—yourself.

Wise after the event, it is easy to see now that Mary was ill advised not to entrust Trelawny with the material he wanted, for in his *Recollections* he was to bring Shelley inimitably to life; she should have realized that he was not a Medwin—nor a Hogg; but at the time she genuinely believed that she would be able to undertake the work herself. Even after the strain put upon her health by editing the *Poems* for publication in 1831 she would not admit defeat, and to the end of her life she hoped to write it. Trelawny had asked Mary for frankness, and he would not admit to her his disappointment, but continued to make full use of her to negotiate for him the publication of the first part of his autobiography with Colburn.

As soon as she read the manuscript she had known that certain passages would have to come out; even if they got past a publisher's reader they would be considered objectionable by the public: the day of Smollett was done. She had, therefore, begged him to allow her to expunge them. It had taken some real courage to suggest it, for she knew he would turn round and abuse her for a prude, and she was not surprised when he threw at her the names of other friends who had raised no such objections:

¹Landor, a man of superior literary acquirements; Kirkup, an artist of superior taste; Baring, a man of the world and very religious; Mrs. Baring, moral and squeamish; Lady Burghersh, aristocratic and proud as a queen; and lastly, Charles Brown, a plain downright Cockney critic, learned in the trade of authorship, and has served his time as a literary scribe.

She could only think they had not read the manuscript as carefully, or that, if they had, they were more willing to let the matter go, feeling less responsibility. They had also less ex-

¹ To Mary, Jan. 19th, 1831. *Letters*, p. 139.

perience of the present state of publishing. Brown had known it in a time of prosperity, and, living in Italy now, little realized how it had been affected by current political events. Public attention was all focused on Parliament and the question of reform; it was a lean time for authorship, as she well knew, not only from her experience but from the negotiations which it had now become her task to carry out for her father.

She risked Trelawny's impatience and insisted on alterations. There were then difficulties over the title; Trelawny with his native sense of the *mot juste* had wanted 'A Man's Life', but Colburn would not have it, and as an alternative suggested 'The Discarded Son'. This the author rejected, and as the date of publication was drawing near, and correspondence with Italy took time, Mary on her own responsibility had to accept the title under which the book finally appeared in 1831, *The Adventures of a Younger Son*.¹

In one of the letters in which the book is the principal topic Trelawny threw out a suggestion of marriage.² 'I should not wonder if fate, without our choice, united us; and who can control his fate? I blindly follow his decrees, dear Mary.' Mary was quick to reject this, and answered in a tone of banter that does not really become her, but 'there is wisdom in women'; if he had not been serious, he would be relieved that she had realized it; if it was a genuine offer, he would not be humiliated by her refusal.

My name will *never* be Trelawny. I am not so young as I was when you first knew me, but I am as proud. I must have the entire affection, devotion, and, above all, the solicitous protection of any

¹ The second part of the autobiography was published in 1858, *The Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*. *Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author* appeared in 1878.

² Apr. 8th, 1831. *Letters*, p. 162. Mr. Massingham says, 'Trelawny's letter to Mary in 1831 suggesting their marriage (he was in Florence at the time) is not extant', but I do not see that any other than the above need have been written. There is no suggestion of a letter missing in the correspondence reproduced by Mrs. Marshall, chap. xxii, and the omitted passages (which I have seen in Boscombe MSS. A) here and in the *Letters* do not refer to matrimony.

one who would win me. You belong to womenkind in general, and Mary Shelley will *never* be yours. . . .

For once Trelawny, with a sentimental short-sightedness unlike himself, may have thought that in marriage with Mary he could recapture something of the Pisan past, but Mary read more clearly the signs of the times. He had been difficult enough when they were together on his visit to England, and now in letters he went out of his way to annoy her. From criticizing her literary taste he went on to criticizing her friends, writing of them with a pungency that she could not fail to resent:

¹. . . By the bye Mary, what a dish of skimmed milk is this Mother Hare; why do you mock a woman as old as I am, by calling her dear girl? And the old Hare is a pedantic blockhead and the young leveret a pert, conceited, spoiled boy. You must indeed be hard pressed for companions when, with such a mind as yours, you can lower yourself to the level of such animals as these. In truth you have fallen from the high estate (I mean in respect of companionship) in which I first knew you—the Robinsons and the chaffy set with which they are allied, and then such straw stuffed idols as these Hares that you appear to idolise. God forgive you, for you have much to answer for.

The laurels were all cut indeed in the 1830s, but life had to be lived, and Mary had come to what terms she could with it. Trelawny, for all the high estate that he, too, had known, let himself be lionized when he came back to London—patronized by Lady Blessington, and numbered among Mrs. Norton's admirers. He rubbed shoulders with Mary at *soirées*:

². . . Oh, you want to know about Mary—I was at a party with her last night—or rather met her there—she lights up very well at night—and shows to advantage in society—for there she is happy—detesting solitude—in the country she does nothing but complain—she is now determined to fix her head quarters in Town—has a lodging near the Regents park, and is seeking a small house to call

¹ Unpublished portion of letter to Mary, Apr. 8th, 1831. *Letters*, p. 159.

² To Claire, Mar. 23rd, 1836. *Letters*, p. 196.

her own. In the daylight the faded colour and chinks of time are observable, but not disproportionate to her years; my bronzed visage is battered and weather-stained—women are made of softer stuff—and she shows it—some things harden by time and exposure as stones and bones—but not beauty's cheek. . . .

The correspondence continued, but the old confidence had gone; his badinage is meant to hurt; and Mary, on the defensive, becomes shy and writes stiffly and sententiously in return. He teases her with glimpses of the philanderer that he knows she dislikes:

Hastings, 25th September 1836.

¹Mary, dear,

Your letter was exceedingly welcome; it was honoured accordingly. You divine truly; I am leading a vegetable sort of a life. They say the place is pretty, the air is good, the sea is fine. I would willingly exchange a pretty place for a pretty girl. The air is keen and shrewish, and as to the sea, I am satisfied with a bath of less dimensions. Notwithstanding the want of sun, and the abundance of cold winds, I lave my sides daily in the brine, and thus I am gradually cooling down to the temperature—of the things round about me—so that the thinnest skinned feminine may handle me without fear of consequences. . . .

Later in the same letter he seems to repent:

. . . You say, 'Had I seen those eyes you saw the other day.' Yes, the darts shot from those eyes are still rankling in my body; yet it is a pleasing pain. The wound of the scorpion is healed by applying the scorpion to the wound. Is she not a glorious being? Have you ever seen such a presence? Is she not dazzling? There is enchantment in all her ways. . . .

. . . You have a soul, and sense, and a deep feeling for your sex, and revere such 'cunning patterns of excelling nature,'^a therefore—besides, I owe it you—I will transcribe what she says of you: 'I was nervous, it was my first visit to any one, and there is a gentle frankness in her manner, and a vague remembrance of the thought and feeling in her books which prevents my being as with a 'visiting acquaintance'. . . .

¹ To Mary, Sept. 25th, 1836. *Letters*, p. 203. (a) Cf. *Othello*, v. ii. 11.

This reference has been taken by Mrs. Marshall to allude to Fanny Kemble, and by Mr. Buxton Forman to Mrs. Norton, but neither of these would have been likely to be 'nervous', and Mrs. Norton would not be paying a first visit in 1836. It is much more likely that the allusion is to Mrs. Augusta Goring, to whom Trelawny was to be married later, and whose correspondence with Mary shows the genuine friendship that existed between them, however little Trelawny troubled to encourage it.¹ His last letter to Mary was written in 1837:² though they might meet, their intimacy was over.

November 18th 1837.

[a line of Persian]

a Persian Proverb—which barbarised into English means, The dog's tail never becomes straight.

And the rapids that cause such commotion in the channels thro' which my blood flows it is as impossible to remove—as it would be those leading directly to the falls of Niagara—I should be as sweet and mawkish as metheglin or water melon—or what is worse—a thoroughly good sort of person, but that my dulcet disposition was at my birth craftily qualified—by the devil with aspics—not merely a squeeze of acid juice. The difference between us is this—that I acting in accordance to my nature—always think I am acting right, whilst you think me always wrong.

As to what you say about confidences—even to you I never do more—than show the outside or just lift the lid of the iron chest.

Can't possibly come to the Stanhopes—every Monday I am at the Kembles—beautiful women and richly endowed men—congregate there on most days.

Augusta talks of the Elgin marbles to-morrow—and you—not that there is any affinity in the respective substances, granite is harder than marble.

Yours

E. TRELAWNY.

9 Duke Street, St. James.

¹ See two letters quoted below, pp. 225-7, and Mary's letter, 1850, pp. 250-1. Other letters (Boscombe MSS. A) show that they were in fairly regular correspondence, also that Mary saw Trelawny in the winter of 1847-8.

² Unpublished. From Boscombe MSS. A.

That the friendship with Augusta continued although they did not see each other is evident from Mary's letters to her and should present a problem to the critics, ironically enough led by Trelawny, who accuse Mary of narrow-mindedness and conventionality, for the evidence given publicly before Parliament when it considered the Divorce Bill was as unsavoury as any in a modern law-court, and the current of prejudice (and Augusta Goring was the 'guilty party') ran no less strongly.¹

In 1858, the year of the publication of the *Recollections*, Trelawny committed the one really discreditable act of his life. After living in retirement in Usk for nearly twenty years with Augusta and having two sons and a daughter by her, he suddenly introduced into the household a 'Miss B.' Augusta withdrew from the place:

²A complete break-up soon followed. Cefnallan was sold, with all its furniture and most of the books. It was a three days' auction, and is still talked of by the old people because of Trelawny's unexampled hospitality during its progress. Open house was kept, and no embargo placed on any drink supplies except whiskey for which he had a great dislike. And so he departed from Monmouthshire, and was seen no more. . . .

The real reason for Trelawny's bitterness towards Mary in the *Records*, published twenty years after the *Recollections*, is the knowledge that she would have taken his wife's part, and in attacking her he is fighting his own conscience. The usual reason given for their estrangement, the Moxon affair, does not

¹ The Act itself, written on a single roll of parchment, is preserved in the House of Lords. The Bill was promoted by Harry Dent Goring for the dissolution of his marriage on account of his wife's 'adulterous and criminal conversation with Edward Trelawny, Esquire, of Putney in the County of Surrey'. It was presented on May 6th, 1841, in the House of Lords, sent to the Commons on June 4th, and received the Royal Assent on June 21st. As a necessary preliminary to this (Nov. 24th, 1840) Goring had won his action for trespass against Trelawny in the Court of Common Pleas and been awarded £100 damages.

² Account quoted in *The Friend of Shelley*, by H. J. Massingham, p. 296. Trelawny spent the rest of his life between London and Sompting. He died aged 89 in 1881.

account by itself for the difference of tone in Trelawny's two Memoirs. When Mary published Shelley's poems in 1839 she left out the notes to *Queen Mab* and the dedication to Harriet. In a rage Trelawny returned the book to Moxon, the publisher. Hogg, who had previously agreed that Mary had the right to use her own judgement, also wrote insultingly to her about the dedication.

¹*Journal. February 12th, 1839.* I much disliked the leaving out any of *Queen Mab*. I disliked it still more than I can express, and I even wish I had resisted to the last; but when I was told that certain portions would injure the copyright of all the volumes to the publisher, I yielded. . . .

. . . When Clarke's edition of *Queen Mab* came to us at the Baths of Pisa, Shelley expressed great pleasure that these verses were omitted. This recollection caused me to do the same. It was to do him honour. What could it be to me? There are other verses I should well like to obliterate for ever, but they will be printed; and any to her could in no way tend to my discomfort, or gratify one

¹ Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 289. The Notes were omitted at Moxon's request. There is no question of 'giving Mary the benefit of the doubt' (pace Mr. Massingham), as the letter to Leigh Hunt (Dec. 12th, 1838) first published in Ingpen's *Letters* (Julian edition) proves. '... Moxon wants me to leave out the sixth part as too atheistical. I don't like Atheism—nor does he now. Yet I hate mutilation—what do you say?' Moxon was not unduly careful, as in 1841 his prosecution was initiated by Henry Hetherington, who argued that if he were 'prosecuted for publishing cheap blasphemy, Moxon ought to be prosecuted for publishing expensive blasphemy'. Moxon was never called up for judgement. Mary wrote indignantly, July 16th, 1841, 'I know not what to say to your refusal of compensation for all the expense which the Liberals have put you to . . .'; and Trelawny wrote, June 30th, 1841, 'Your subsequent edition of the work entire proves that . . . well-timed caution alone influenced you. . . . I do not write this in idle condolence, or to say that I am sorry for ever having misconceived your acts, but simply to say that in purse and person I am ready to serve you.' *Letters from A Shelley Library*, pp. 113 and 114.

Lady Caroline Norton wrote to console Mary: 'As to Moxon himself, he seemed very cheerful and complacent about it and sorry that you should be vexed or anxious on the subject. . . . Talfourd will of course make a very eloquent defence and the edition will sell the quicker for the discussion.' From unpublished letters in Boscombe MSS. A, by permission of Lord Grantley.

ungenerous feeling. They shall be restored, though I do not feel easy as to the good I do Shelley. . . .

In a bitter passage that Mrs. Marshall omits, Mary says of Trelawny:

How very much he must enjoy the opportunity thus offered of doing a rude and insolent act. It was *almost* worth while to make the omission if only to give this pleasure.

The wonder is not that the friendship between two such opposite temperaments broke, but that it lasted so long. Trelawny was by temperament a *fauve*, Mary was essentially civilized; and if Trelawny indeed thought of her as his biographer said he did, 'the dedicated bearer of the sacred phial that held some drops from the fount of Arethusa, and when she spilt them she forfeited all',¹ he got no more than he deserved! People must be liked for themselves, not for their relationship to others: there are few bonds more frail than the love of a common friend. Inevitably what each gives and each receives is different, and with the passage of time discrepancies widen as the image of the beloved fades. Facets of personality are brought out by lights shed upon them, and two people do not love the same person. Trelawny's Shelley was not Mary's, but because she did not understand Trelawny it does not follow that she did not understand Shelley.

It may have been inevitable, but the break is sad. 'Can such things be, and overcome us like a summer's cloud, without our special wonder?'

(Exmouth) Exeter 7th Novr (?) 1837.

²I must congratulate you on your house, in Park Street, My dear Mary, a most agreeable situation, after all a lodging is much the same as having the whole in ones control, avoiding taxes, tythes and a thousand incalculable extra expenses and the 2 or 3 rooms one

¹ H. J. Massingham, *The Friend of Shelley*, p. 207.

² Two unpublished letters from Augusta Goring to Mary, from Boscombe MSS. A.

haunts are equally ones own. I should like my own furniture, I think? but then moving it is a trouble. I begin to know something of these things having had to *manage* alone for some weeks—besides travelling, hiring lodgings etc. and this *was* quite out of my way—having been brought up in a greenhouse—a good for nothing exotic (as I've been told). I am enraged with your pretty maiden—what has she done? I always thought she seemed so attached to you—but (in spite of democracy) I know there is *no truth* to be placed in uneducated people—interest is generally their first motive and as long as nothing *clashes* its all well enough—do try an older person next time—and give her no *power* to behave ill—so much of a womans comfort depends on a trustworthy maiden, that I can well fancy how annoyed you must be, it is not so easy to replace.

Your letter is most kind—a little flattery did me good—we sometimes want to be put in good humour with ourselves—My 'strength' if I have any, does not certainly consist in independence of sympathy! who, in utter selfishness can be happy without loving? Oh, no, solitude is not good for *long* though most refreshing is the repose that leaves the soul to expand after its own nature—to get away from the common—the dusty road of life and breathe and dream of freedom.

[a passage about a friend, Major Radcliffe.]

We have been here a week, we couldn't well stay longer at Lynmouth—I came here with the *intent* of going directly to Dawlish or Teignmouth, but we could not readily arrange this; to-morrow we go to Exmouth for a week and to London on the 15th when I hope to meet my brother there—and settle my affairs—imagination will tell you all I am unwilling to write—but I shall see you soon—meanwhile do not be 'frightened', there is nothing new. I am satisfied I act right. My child is well and merry. How strange of Gee not to have written again and now its too late for a country visit—at least to [Nussin?] there's a degree of thoughtless selfishness in that family that dissatisfies one—She has never written to me—nor have I attempted to renew our correspondence since I heard what she amused herself by saying of her 'dear friend'. I will tell you where I am as soon as I arrive in town. If you see G. say nothing of my letter, please. If you are kind enough to write again direct post office Exmouth. Enclose to M.P. I send this without a frank for

which I pray your pardon as *I don't know* if G. is in London yet—walking on planks don't make me dizzy! if its the only way we must cross fearlessly nor look behind.

Yours affy. A G

(no date) Burlington Street 2 o'clock.

It is arranged, my dear Mary, and *we* shall not meet for a while—How I shall regret my kind ever sympathising friend I need not say, nor could I if I would just now, being so hurried and having gone through all the scene of reconciliation, has shaken me all to pieces—I will not say 'goodbye' we shall re-unite I feel sure—some powers I will not allow to fate—but not yet nor to-day for I have so much to do before I return. This is the first thing I have done (this and only post) E.* and Ld. Monmouth and my brother—who says I am an angel! tho' I maintain 'tis but a natural 'instinct' to sacrifice everything for ones children. Oh God, the misery I saw for them they were to be given to the care of a woman I hate!

E. gives up his point *entirely* and wishes to do all things to please me—he says we keep the London house and (there) for the present perhaps go for the wedding in April.—my first object will be to estrange him from my enemies in his own family—then to gain power—as I may—over self first, then him.

I am not expected to be 'rude' to any friends when I do meet them—by chance which I trust may often happen—I make no *promises*. E. behaved very well to-day.

I have to return packs of worldly visiting cards, already left for me and to do everything I hate. I am intolerably wretched just now—but I trust to my buoyant spirits to make something of an existence hereafter. God bless you, dr. Mary. I shall hear of you through mutual friends whom I shall *seek*, and I hope for better days. Love me and tell of my sad story, (but do *not tell* that we do not meet) for we shall in heart I think.

Ever afftly and gratefully,
Yours AUGUSTA.

(a) E. must be Trelawny.

VIII

1831

(CLAIRE 1831-1849)

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WHEN Percy Florence was of an age to go to a public school, Mary applied to Sir Timothy's solicitors for an increased allowance, but the reply she received was disappointing:

<sup>1</sup>... I lose not a moment, after I receive this communication from him, to make it known to you, and I trust and hope you will find it practicable to give him a good education out of the £300 a year.—

I remain, Madam, your very obedient servant,

WM. WHITTON.

Determined to send him to Harrow,<sup>2</sup> 'now in high reputation under a new headmaster', and where she was assured there were none of the brutalities of the Eton fagging system, she struggled to pay his school fees, but the amount of them, £60 a term, was too big a strain on her resources, and in April 1833 she moved to Harrow so that he could attend as a day boy. This entailed some sacrifice, as in Somerset Street, Portman Square, she had been able to keep in touch with what was going

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> He was entered at The Grove, Sept. 1832, left 1836; Trin. College Camb. B.A. 1841 (Harrow School Register). The headmaster was the Rev. C. T. Longley, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury; he had been elected in March 1829. His housemaster was the Rev. Benjamin Hall Kennedy, afterwards headmaster of Shrewsbury and Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge. According to Torre, *Recollections of Harrow*, 1890, discipline was very lax at this time and the general standard of teaching low. There was a fire at The Grove in Jan. 1833 which completely destroyed the boys' quarters (Mary applied to Gregson, Whitton's more sympathetic successor, for extra allowance for the clothes lost) and the House Boards bear no records of names before 1833. Cf. Mary's unpublished letter to Trelawny, Somerset Street (1832), the end of which was given on p. 212 above: '... Dear Trelawny, I came home this morning and am impatient to see you. I enjoyed myself at Harrow as much as the vile weather would permit. Percy is very happy—he likes his school and is delighted with the freedom and comfort he enjoys. There are 30 boys in the same house with him, only two of whom have the power of fagging—so that he does not in the least suffer by the only evil of a public school. ...'

on, and was near Godwin, but perpetual money troubles left her no option.

Claire, in Pisa again as companion to Mrs. Mason's daughters, was horrified at the Harrow decision; overwhelmed by superstitious melancholy, she wrote to remind Mary that it was the tenth anniversary of the year when disaster had overtaken their youth.

<sup>1</sup> . . . I am very glad to hear that Percy likes Harrow, but I shudder from head to foot when I think of your boldness in sending him there. I think in certain things you are the most daring woman I ever knew. There are few mothers who, having suffered the misfortunes you have, and having such advantages depending upon the life of an only son, would venture to expose that life to the dangers of a public school. . . .

I hope nothing will happen to Percy; but the year, the school itself that you have chosen, and the ashes that lie near it, and the hauntings of my own mind, all seem to announce the approach of that consummation which I dread.

But her prognostications of evil were not to be fulfilled. Percy Florence continued to do well, and, as a day boy, he enjoyed being able to invite his friends to his home. His mother wrote to Maria Gisborne:

<sup>2</sup> . . . Cultivation of the affections is surely an advantage; then it cultivates his hospitality, since his friends would rather dine badly with him than well at their tutors'. He has two who frequent the house; he will not extend the number for fear of annoying me. Sometimes he gives breakfast to six or eight and so gets a portion of popularity, despite my poverty; this last has caused him to be quizzed now and then. The character I hear from others that he bears among his companions is, that he is very clever, and gives more help than any boy in the school, but is very haughty. It is odd, that with me, he is yielding either to persuasion or rebuke, but with his boys their utmost violence can never make him give in a jot. He can say no which I cannot do, and has lively spirits and is indeed a strange mixture of Shelley and myself. He wants sensibility,

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished letters. Boscombe MSS. A.

but I fancy myself at his age almost as covert, except that Mrs. Godwin had discovered long before my excessive and romantic attachment to my Father.

This shows that he was a normally sociable boy, although later on he showed his father's dislike of 'acquaintances' and preferred the company of a few old associates to new faces in a crowd. Claire 'hears with dismay', in one of her letters, that he makes a hermit of himself and 'bars out everybody he did not know when he was nine years old'; she begs him to go out to parties and to enjoy himself when there.

In appearance he had the bright blue Shelley eyes, but was rather inclined to fat. His temper, however, was as equable as it had been as a child, and, as the above letter shows, he had a consideration for his mother exceptional to his years. He was fond of music and the theatre and continued to show some skill in drawing. His mother wrote to Trelawny:

1. . . Percy arrived yesterday, having rather whetted than satisfied his appetite by going seven times to the play. He plays like Apollo on the flageolet, and like Apollo is self-taught. Jane thinks him a miracle! it is very odd. He got a frock-coat at Mettes, and, if you had not disappointed us with your handkerchief, he would have been complete; he is a good deal grown, though not tall enough to satisfy me; however, there is time yet. He is quite a child still, full of theatres and balloons and music, yet I think there is a gentleness about him which shows the advent of the reign of petticoats—how I dread it!

The move out to Harrow meant that Mary was largely cut off from London friends and the society she enjoyed. Her life there is summed up in a Journal entry for December 2nd, 1834:

2. . . Routine occupation is the medicine of my mind. I write the 'Lives' in the morning. I read novels and memoirs of an evening—such is the variety of my days and time flies so swift, that days form weeks and weeks form months, before I am aware. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Trelawny, Jan. 3rd, 1837. Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished entry. (a) 'Lives' for Lardner's *Encyclopaedia*.

My heart and soul is bound up in Percy. My race is run. I hope absolutely nothing except that when he shall be older and I a little richer to leave a solitude, very unnatural to anyone and peculiarly disagreeable to me. . . .

The sacrifices that Mary made for her son in these years were to be well rewarded by him as soon as he was of age, and from this time onward her life, retired as it might be and not without financial worries and grief at the death of friends (Lord Dillon in 1832, the Gisbornes<sup>1</sup> in 1835, Godwin in 1836<sup>2</sup>), was finding something of that serenity towards which she had long struggled. There was triumph, too; her novel *Lodore* in 1835 met with considerable success. It was much lighter in vein than her other novels, but there were parts of it almost completely autobiographical. She had again brought in a character based on Byron, and had to admit that Claire's criticism was not unjustified:

<sup>3</sup>Mrs. Hare admired *Lodore* amazingly; so do I, or should I, if it were not for that modification of the beastly character of Lord Byron of which you have composed *Lodore*. I stick to *Frankenstein*, merely because that vile spirit does not haunt its pages as it

<sup>1</sup> They lived at Plymouth in rather straitened circumstances. Mrs. Gisborne died of dropsy, her husband nursing her devotedly to the last. Her correspondence with Mary was continuous.

<sup>2</sup> In reply to Mary Hays, who had attended Mary Wollstonecraft on her death-bed and now asked for the return of her letters to Godwin, Mary wrote: ' . . . By my father's will his papers will pass thro' my hands, and your most reasonable request will be complied with. There is nothing more detestable and cruel than the publication of letters meant for one eye only. . . . You will be glad to know that one whom you once knew so well, died without much suffering—his illness was a catarrhal fever which his great age did not permit him to combat—he was ill about 10, and confined to his bed 5 days—I sat up several nights with him—and Mrs. Godwin was with him when I was not—as he had a great horror of being left to servants. His thoughts wandered a good deal but not painfully—he knew himself to be dangerously ill but did not consider his recovery impossible. His last moment was very sudden—Mrs. Godwin and I were both present. He was dozing tranquilly, when a slight rattle called us to his side, his heart ceased to beat, and all was over. . . . ' Apr. 20th, 1836. From *Love Letters of Mary Hays*, edited A. F. Wedd, 1925, p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 265.

does all your other novels, now as Castruccio, now as Raymond, now as Lodore.

Good God! to think a person of your genius, whose moral tact ought to be proportionately exalted, should think it a task befitting its power to gild and embellish and pass off as beautiful what was the merest compound of vanity, folly, and every miserable weakness that ever met together in one human being!

Instead of love, Claire's emotional nature had fed on hate until she had grown to attribute even Allegra's death to Byron's deliberate intention. His obstinacy in disregarding her warnings about the climate of Bagnacavallo may have been criminal, but typically, with more heart for remorse than sorrow, he was grief-stricken when the child died. To Mary the passing of that funeral procession which she had watched on Highgate Hill brought memories of happiness in which he had shared! that served to make her forget the rest.

If she was sometimes discontented with her lot, she could reflect, if it was any comfort, that Claire's was far worse; a companion governess in Italy, where she had shared in the first adventures of Shelley's radiant youth, she had little now to hope for beyond financial independence when Shelley's legacies should be paid.<sup>1</sup> She is still at her best in letters, alert and yet mellowed by experience. She writes to Mary from Wingfield Park, April 20th, 1838, in reference to some passing attachment of Percy's at Cambridge:

<sup>2</sup>Of this I am perfectly sure—that few intellects are strong enough not to become the prey of the passion from seventeen to seven-and-twenty—Nature won't be cheated.... Poor Boy, but I pity him and all young people of his age whose heart is just opening, who pine to expand themselves, and find unsurmountable barriers placed everywhere. It is not much praise to the supreme Lord of Life what I am going to say, which is Thank God I can never be young again. At least that suffering is spared me.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Timothy Shelley, born Sept. 1753, was now (in 1838) 85. He died Apr. 24th, 1844.

<sup>2</sup> This and the following letters are unpublished, from Boscombe MSS. A.

To Percy she writes affectionately, with a genuine warmth that shows he was something more to her than the heir on whom her future depended:

January 5th, 1838.

My dearest Percy.—Here is a pretty Christmas for me which deprives me of the pleasure of seeing you and buries me in the country amid strangers, restraint and solitude. I hope you are happier, enjoying the society of your mother, your friends, Jane and Jefferson, Edward and Dina and Julian Robinson. . . .

. . . Pray tell me what you are doing in music? Does your passion for it still last? Mine does—I find it comes nearer my soul than poetry or philosophy or patriotism or even love.

And she is shrewd about Jane Hogg:

[1844 no date.]

. . . alas, poor Percy, my poor dear Percy—at last he will know what it is to be liked by Henry and Dina—that it will cost him Jane's love and esteem. Always now will he be viewed by her as a suspicious person, and wished away—and lucky will he be, if on some slight occasion lending itself, she does not get up a little calumny to deteriorate his merit. Thus I know it happened with me. . . . Could I do what is just, I would have a board stuck up before Mrs. Hogg's door, warning any-one who cared for their happiness, to have nothing to do with her.

What her life was when she came back to England is made pitifully plain in a letter to Mary, October 30th, 1840:

My dear Mary,—I reply to yours but am as usual in great haste. . . . Do not think of writing the memoirs—you must on no account use your mind—health is everything, and when you consider of what importance you will be to Percy's progress in life for the next ten years—you will consider that it is an imperious duty in you to arrive at the best health you can whatever sacrifice it may cost you.

. . . I am so worried I fear I shall go out of my mind—this is now my life—I go by nine to Mrs. Kitchen's house where I give lessons till one—then I rush to the top of Wilton Place and get a Richmond omnibus and go to Richmond to give a lesson to the Cohens—

their daughter is going to be married to a Genoese and must have an Italian lesson every day . . . that vile omnibus takes two hours to get to Richmond and the same to come back and so with giving my lesson I am never back before seven.

. . . I am only able to answer you by return of post because it is Saturday, the resting day of the Jews. . . .

In 1844 she was to be released from her existence of hard work and care:

April 28th 1844.

My dearest Mary,

It is certainly a strange inexplicable feeling to receive a letter saying Sir Tim is dead; it is but a common bit of news and analogous to what happens every day, yet my first emotion was utter disbelief; the most hard, unyielding disbelief. The idea of that man had been so long my companion, that it seems tearing half my mind out to convince me I have no occasion to think of him any longer. I am glad for you and am very glad to call my dear Percy, Sir Percy, which may be a vulgar pleasure in other respects, but allied to the recollection of Lady Shelley and her son John, becomes out of spite to their abominable spitefulness and maliciousness against Percy, an exquisite and refined pleasure . . . it will not add a penny to my income. . . .

but, strangely enough, from now on the old vivacity and gallant bearing of her letters gives place to querulousness and discontent. She admits that the merest cross makes her weep for an hour:

(January 10th, 1846.)

. . . I think the end of the world is come if I hear a sudden noise. . . . Love to dearest Percy—he must not buy any hearth rug for his sitting room for I have worked him one which I bring all ready to lay down. It is worked with roses of all colours except black, and is to be an emblem of his life, past, present and future. I am so glad he is in the militia—and so glad he is in the law—and now if he goes into Parliament and if he falls in love, and to boot is a musician and a metaphysician and a good boater, in a little time he will be a universe of a man comprehending all things.

It was as if the relief to her circumstances which should have freed her spirit had come too late. To a certain extent this was by her own fault, for the £12,000 that she received from the Shelley estate was badly invested and at the end of her life she was in poverty again. In her later letters there are references to a box at the Opera which was a total loss, and also to unsuccessful foreign investments which had probably been made on the advice of her brother Charles, whom she later joined again in Vienna.<sup>1</sup> Of him, as if on the defensive now with Mary, she declared (Aug. 1845), 'he is like me, *immensely prudent* as regards money'. With his large family, Charles seems to have made good in Vienna; he was English tutor to 'the young Archduke, heir to the throne of Austria' (later the Emperor Francis Joseph), and although the post was not very lucrative it carried with it a pension of £30 a year and 'influence' which was useful for obtaining appointments for his children.

In 1849 Claire ungraciously accepts an invitation for her nieces and nephews to visit Field Place, and cannot forbear a sneer at Mary's daughter-in-law:

April 11th, 1849. [On top is scribbled 'Our clothes are very shabby that I warn you of'.]

... [Money difficulties.] I hope you will get through and if your young people are, I think you will—they are very well disposed to economy—especially Lady Shelley—for she told me she did not care for the luxuries of Life and wanted only Bread and Cheese. Your estate must be an improvable one and now with a Scotch Bailiff he will improve it as far as possible my only fear is—that neither you or Percy are able to manage affairs in a way advantageous to yourselves. Your capacities are not in fault—that you well know—but that dislike you both have of looking into a disagreeable subject and so you are like clay in the hands of those who have an interest in deceiving you. This is one of the reasons I always say disagreeable things to you and Percy because I cannot bear that

<sup>1</sup> 'We are unhappy also at the news from Austria. The Hungarians will be on Vienna perhaps before any one is aware. . . . What a state the rest of Europe is in! How grateful ought we to be in England for the calm we enjoy.' This reference to a chronic state of affairs is dated Apr. 22nd, 1849.

anyone should think I am paying my court to you and taking advantage of your love of agreeable sensations. I wish I could hear you are quite well—from personal experience I should say you would lose the numb feeling in your limbs if you left off *stays* entirely. I know you do not tight lace no more did I—yet I am so strong since I have worn no stays. You will get over all this nervousness which teases you so. . . .

[About bringing Cleary to stay if she can board out Willy who is learning farming, Charles' children.] Only I cannot imagine what you want to see these two children for? and I am afraid of their not pleasing and incurring the criticisms of your *superfine wit*. And poor dears, they have to earn their livelihood—and are such well disposed young people and it would be a pity to turn them from the right path and make them miserable for life, which often happens when poor people frequent the society of the rich. . . . Write one line—say if Lady S's mother has paid her visit—if you are again alone and if I can come without warning. Say if I can stay one month and one day. How I wish there were a little furniture in Chester Square [so that she could stay there when she comes up?]. Charles is at Olmutz and will stay till the Court goes to Schönbrunn. He gains tolerably and is so much better in health because he has but little work to do. He sees the young brothers of the young Emperor every day, and they are so fond of him and always have Willy's letters read to them and are as much interested in him as if he were their brother. Willy is furious at this because the old Emperor their uncle disarmed the students and Willy cannot forget or forgive their having taken his sword from him. . . .

I hope you are all well—leave off your stays—eat no potatoes—take ginger and you will be well.

Ever yours

CL.

So much for Claire at fifty, the girl who had been so gay, so 'romantic', and so tiresome. The last glimpse we have of her is through Percy Florence's eyes, in the following letter sent to Robert Browning, with a covering note saying that he will tell him the tale some time:

<sup>1</sup>Sir,—I have received a note from Mr. Rt. Browning who for-

<sup>1</sup> From a rough copy of a letter; Boscombe MSS. A. Claire died in Florence

wards me a letter from you to him—in which you mention that Miss Clairmont wishes to sell me certain letters and papers.

If these documents are of any importance they should have been given to my mother when she was engaged in publishing my fathers letters in

I heard at the time that Miss Clairmont gave everything of any biographical or literary value to my mother for the purposes of publication.

You are right in supposing that the relations between Miss Clairmont and myself are not those of intimacy

of entire cordiality [crossed out]

Since nearly 25 years ago by reason of certain [crossed out] circumstances which I will not trouble you with detailing I have not seen Miss Clairmont—though as in the present instance she had twice endeavoured to make a [crossed out] communicate with me through the medium of a third person.

Miss Clairmont is no relation of mine. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clairmont which last on the death of her husband became the wife of William Godwin.

In answer to your application therefore I have simply to say that I decline to purchase these documents—and I may add that I feel the less disposed to make a move in the matter inasmuch as Miss Clairmont being a stranger in the Shelley family received £12000 from money raised upon the Shelley estates.<sup>a</sup> I have no right or wish of course to grudge the payment of this legacy—but I think the sum above named ought to have satisfied the lady

I have the honour to be, Sir

Your most obt. servant

PERCY SHELLEY.

on Mar. 19th, 1879. She had become a Roman Catholic and lived in a convent during her last years.

(a) For particulars about this legacy and a discussion of the question whether the amount was a mistake (£6,000 wrongly written twice over) see Ingpen, *Shelley in England*, p. 473.



PART 6  
'UNHOPED SERENE'  
1840-1851

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*. . . and that unhopèd serene,  
That men call age . . .*

RUPERT BROOKE, 'The Dead'.



## I

1840-1841

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IN 1840 the invitation that Percy Florence, now at Trinity College, Cambridge,¹ pressed on his mother to join him and two college friends² on a tour of the Continent in the summer vacation made Mary feel that all her struggles and sacrifices had been worth while. She felt as flattered as a girl at the first attentions of an admirer, and with something of the same coyness found herself protesting that they could not really want her: it was kind and thoughtful of them to suggest it, but she was too old to think of being their companion.

But her son persisted, and when she knew she intended to give herself the pleasure of yielding she yet held out longer for the greater pleasure of having him persuade her. This was the real happiness of parenthood; that when the child was no longer dependent he should voluntarily choose the company of the one who had reared him. She had looked forward to some possibility of this years ago in a passage she had written in *The Last Man*, but while she had been fairly sanguine in hope then, so much had happened since to break her confidence in herself that she would not have dared believe she should hold her child's affection any more securely than the loyalty of her friends.

So many had failed her, he might be like them. There must surely be something in her that prevented fidelity if those of

¹ Between Harrow and Cambridge, Percy Florence went to a tutor's, the Rev. A. C. H. Morrison, Stoneleigh, nr. Leamington.

² Footnotes to *The Rambles* show that the friends were Henry Hugh Pearson (later Pierson, see D.N.B.) and Andrew Alexander Knox (see D.N.B.), journalist and police magistrate, who was later employed by Mary to recover her letters to Gatteschi in Paris. Pearson had been at The Grove, Harrow, but earlier than Percy Florence; Knox was at Trinity with him.

her own generation, who should have understood her best, deserted her. But, in whatever else she might have been defeated, this proved that in her relationship with her son she had accomplished something. An invitation to go abroad might sound a little thing, but she recognized it for a token of fundamental success. Her prophecy in *The Last Man* had been allowed to come true; her efforts to live up to the principles she had expressed were rewarded.

What deep and sacred emotions are excited in a father's bosom, when he first becomes convinced that his love for his child is not a mere instinct, but worthily bestowed, and that others, less akin, participate his approbation! It was supreme happiness to Idris and myself, to find that the frankness which Alfred's open brow indicated, the intelligence of his eyes, the tempered sensibility of his tones, were not delusions, but indications of talents and virtues, which would 'grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength'. At this period, the termination of an animal's love for its offspring,—the true affection of the human parent commences. . . . His weakness still imparts anxiety to this feeling, his ignorance prevents entire intimacy; but we begin to respect the future man, and to endeavour to secure his esteem, even as if he were our equal. What can a parent have more at heart than the good opinion of his child? In all our transactions with him our honour must be inviolate, the integrity of our relations untainted: fate and circumstances may, when he arrives at maturity, separate us for ever—but, as his aegis is danger, his consolation in hardship, let the ardent youth for ever bear with him through the rough path of life, love and honour for his parents.

And the holiday itself was a great success. His grandfather now allowed Percy £400 a year, and with this he was able to afford his mother the luxury of a maid. They went through France down the Moselle and the Rhine to the Lake of Como. The young men assured her that they got through all the work they intended during their stay, but Mary doubted how far this was really true. Percy Florence at any rate had seemed to spend much more of his time sailing in his boat than at his books.

On the day of their arrival, he had been off to a neigh-



MARY SHELLEY

bouring village, Caratte, to see the boatman there, who had a great reputation, having learnt his craft at Venice. All the boats in the neighbourhood were flat-bottomed, but Percy ordered one to be made with a keel and chose a special sail for it. His passion for boating was the one heritage from his father that distressed her; though she had tried to hide it, her heart had been heavy when she stood by the shore the evening the boat arrived and was joyously greeted by its new owner and his friends. It might be history repeating itself in another 'perfect plaything'.

To hide her anxiety she consented to go out in it when he asked her, but except that it was a sign that their holiday was at an end, it was with relief that she saw it sent away.

On their return journey they decided to make a detour to see Milan, but, once there, they awaited in vain the letter from England which should bring their money for the return journey. As it was essential for the young men to get back, Mary gave them what resources she had, and decided to stay on alone with her maid until the letter came. She would rather stay alone in Italy than anywhere else in the world; to speak the language of the country again gave her intense pleasure, and she felt immediately at home with the people.

¹I love the Italians. It is impossible to live among them and not love them. Their faults are many—the faults of the oppressed—love of pleasure, disregard of truth, indolence, and violence of temper. But their falsehood is on the surface—it is not deceit. Under free institutions, and where the acquirement of knowledge is not as now a mark inviting oppression and wrong, their love of pleasure were readily ennobled into intellectual activity.

In many ways, too, it was a better place than it had been when she lived there as a girl, for hope was springing up anew. The two poets, Manzoni and Niccolini, were inspiring not only men of learning but the people in general with pride in their country and a new passion for her liberty. The time could not be far

¹ *Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843* (Moxon, 1844), vol. i, p. 87.

away when she would no longer be a 'discontented province of Austria', nor the cockpit of French and Austrian ambitions. For Mary was more convinced than ever that her and Shelley's judgement of them would now be justified. Her people would assert themselves; they would find leaders amongst their own nobility, for if too many of them now appeared to be degenerate, dissolute, and lazy, it was more what they had been made than what they really were. As she wrote in the Preface to *The Rambles*:

An Italian gentleman naturally envies an Englishman, hereditary or elective legislator. . . . He sees that we enjoy the privilege of doing and saying whatever we please, so that we infringe no law. If he writes a book, it is submitted to the censor, and if it be marked by any boldness of opinion, it is suppressed. If he attempt any plan for the improvement of his countrymen, he is checked; if a tardy permission be given him to proceed, it is clogged with such conditions as nullify the effect. If he limit his endeavours to self-improvement, he is suspected—surrounded by spies; while his friends share in the odium that attaches to him. The result of such persecution is to irritate or discourage. He either sinks into the Circean Styx, in which so many drag out a degraded existence, or he is irresistibly impelled to resist.

She left Italy via Geneva and stayed on the Lake where she could look across to Diodati.

¹There, on the shores of Bellerive, stood Diodati; and our humble dwelling, Maison Chapuis, nestled close to the lake below. There were the terraces, the vineyards, the upward path threading them, the little port where our boat lay moored; I could mark and recognise a thousand slight peculiarities, familiar objects then—forgotten since.

In the following summer, 1841, they went abroad again, for the experience of the previous year had proved to Mary that the benefit she derived from change of scene and circumstance did her more good than the exertions of the journey did her harm. The worst part of travel was in some ways the putting out from England; at Dover it was necessary to reach the

¹ *Rambles*, vol. i, p. 139.

steamer in a small boat early in the morning, and then, after two and a half hours at sea, it was often impossible to put into Calais at once.

Once arrived, too, a *diligence* seemed slow and uncomfortable after the English railroads, and the necessity to take meals in hotels at a common table, the *table d'hôte*, could be very disagreeable. In France it would be laden with badly dressed French dishes, and there was great difficulty in persuading a servant to provide a towel and even cold water for washing. If this was insisted on, it was provided with many reminders that the meal might be missed! Still, the interest and amusement of watching fellow travellers in these circumstances made up for the discomfort, and so long as the places were reasonably clean and the prices not excessive, they did not grumble.

It would probably, she thought, be more difficult in Germany than it had been the year before in Italy, for none of the party spoke the language well enough to make sure they were not cheated. They knew innkeepers had a way of not bringing the horses round until it was too late to start and the travellers would be obliged to try their hospitality for the night, and coachmen, too, could not always be relied on to finish the journey for the sum first agreed.

But when the time came they travelled without major mishap through Germany to Bohemia, where Prague made a vivid impression on Mary's imagination; thence back to Salzburg, and over the Brenner into Italy again, where she had to steel herself against poignant memories as they approached Venice.

¹ . . . Gathered into myself, with my 'mind's eye' I saw those before me long departed; and I was agitated again by emotions—by passions—and those the deepest a woman's heart can harbour—a dread to see her child even at that instant expire—which then occupied me. It is a strange, but to any person who has suffered, a familiar circumstance, that those who are enduring mental or corporeal agony are strangely alive to immediate external objects, and their imagination even exercises its wild power over them.

¹ *Rambles*, vol. ii, p. 77.

Shakespeare knew this, and the passionate grief of Queen Constance thence is endued with fearful reality. Wordsworth, as many years ago I remember hearing Coleridge remark, illustrates the same fact, when he makes an insane and afflicted mother exclaim,—

‘The breeze I see is in the tree;
It comes to cool my babe and me.’

. . . Thus the banks of the Brenta presented to me a moving scene; not a palace, not a tree of which I did not recognise, as marked and recorded, at a moment when life and death hung upon our speedy arrival at Venice. . . .

They went on and settled for two months in Florence, where it was as cold as it had been during that winter long ago in 1819, and then on to Rome, ‘the bourne of a pious pilgrimage. The treasures of my life lie buried there.’ But no further reference in a book destined for the general public does Mary make to that spot on which her thoughts must have dwelt: the two graves in the burial-ground half-enclosed by a Roman wall beneath the pyramid of Caius Cestius where had grown up the ‘four laurels and six young cypruses’ that Trelawny had planted. In 1823 he had written of it:

¹. . . It is a lovely spot. The only inscription on Shelley’s stone, besides the *Cor cordium* of Hunt, are the lines I have added from Shakespeare—

Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer^a a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.

This quotation, by its double meaning, alludes both to the manner of his death and his genius, and I think the element on which his soul took wing, and the subtle essence of his being, mingled, may still retain him in some other shape. The waters may keep the dead, as the earth may, and fire and air. His passionate fondness might have been from some secret sympathy in their natures. Thence the fascination which so forcibly attracted him, without fear or caution, to trust an element almost all others hold in superstitious dread, and venture as cautiously on as they would in a lair of lions. . . .

¹ *Letters*, p. 53. Buxton Forman. (a) ‘This should of course be *hath suffered*.’—H. B. F.

II

JUNE 1848—FEBRUARY 1851



IF Mary once told Trelawny that she dreaded the 'advent of the reign of petticoats' for Percy Florence, she had too little confidence in her son's good sense and taste. He had never shown any inclination at all to philandering, and she soon realized that if he chose the right wife his was the temperament for an ideal husband. He was equable and humorous, interested in intellectual matters, particularly in the theatre and in drawing, but with none of the artist's itch to create which so often makes the man a difficult companion. Without his genius, he had all his father's human qualities—kindness, patience, affection.

If she had had to choose herself she could not have found a better wife for him than Jane St. John;¹ she had liked her at first sight and the feeling had been reciprocated. The younger woman was a widow and had known suffering, so that she was in a sense a contemporary of the older, and Mary could feel towards her more of the affection of a sister than a mother.

None of the jealousy which she had feared must always come with her son's marriage had been realized. Instead she felt wholly thankful that she would be leaving some one so ideal to care for him when her own strength gave out; to care, too, for her memories and her relics of Shelley, for she appreciated everything to do with him as if she had known him.

And if she treasured memories, Jane treasured Mary, too! She accepted the responsibility of managing Field Place, for Mary had no more taste now for housekeeping than she had in Mamma's days at Skinner Street or with Jane Williams at Casa Magni. And she protected her from Claire; on one of the occasions when she was invited to stay, Jane offered to go away to leave the two old friends together, but Mary

¹ Married June 22nd, 1848, Jane, daughter of Thomas Gibson, widow of Charles Robert St. John.

burst out, 'Do not leave me alone with her; she has been the bane of my life ever since I was three years old.'

The payment of the legacies on the death of Sir Timothy brought letters from old friends. Hogg wrote with a facetiousness that kept only this side insolence:

¹'Dear Mary,

I have just had an interview with Mr. Gregson. He spoke of your affairs cheerfully, and thinks that, with prudence and economy, you and your baronet-boy will do well; and such, I trust and earnestly hope, will be the result of this long turmoil of worldly perplexity. . . .

I was glad to hear from Mr. Gregson, for the honour of poesy, that Lord Byron had declined to receive his legacy. How much I wish that my scanty fortunes would justify the like refusal on my part!

I daresay you wish that you were a good deal richer—that this had happened and not that—and that a great deal, which was quite impossible, had been done, and so on! I should be sorry to believe that you were quite contented; such a state of mind, so preposterous and unnatural, especially in any person whose circumstances were affluent, would surely portend some great calamity.

I hope that I may venture to look forward to the time when the Baronet will inhabit Field Place in a style not unworthy of his name. My desire grows daily in the strength to keep up *families*, for it is only from these that Shelleys and Byrons proceed. . . .

The Leigh Hunts were more grateful, but their troubles had not lessened with the years as their family grew up, and on the payment of the first annuity Mary was importuned for a larger capital sum. Marianne wrote letters and Hunt even called with a solicitor, but she had to refuse, for the Shelley estate had been deliberately depreciated by Sir Timothy, and she was repaying into it the amount of the allowances that she had received. 'Percy and I have all in common—I have *nothing* of my own exclusively.'²

In the diary of James Fields (1859) there is a last glimpse of Leigh Hunt, 'a most interesting, pitiable, lovable man, to be

¹ Mrs. Marshall, vol. ii, p. 304.

² Unpublished letter, British Museum MS. 38524, f. 23.

used kindly but with discretion', removed from the 'poetical Tinkersdom' in which Carlyle knew him at Chelsea to the diminished household of his old age at Hammersmith.

Drove to Hammersmith where we found Leigh Hunt with his two daughters awaiting us. It was a very tiny cottage with white curtains and flowers in the window; but his beautiful manner made it a rich abode. The dear old man talked delightfully about his flowers, calling them gently household pets. . . .

From Trelawny she never heard again after 1837, but she acknowledges gratefully a letter from his wife in 1850. Her answer to it sums up the unhopd serene of her closing years, telling of her happiness with her son and daughter-in-law and, with genuine interest, asking after Augusta's children, garden, home. . . . 'I hope the sun is shining on you as cheerfully as it does on me.'

Her last thoughts were for her friends; with the fatal paralysis¹ gaining upon her, she remembered Isabel and asked her son to provide for that first friend—one who had used her none too well but whom, perhaps for friendship's sake, she had not ceased to love. 'Preserve always a habit of giving', she had quoted in the Journal—the last words that she was to write in it—and she would not regret that she and Shelley had been prodigal of their love. Hogg, Emilia, Jane, Trelawny—new friends did not increase with the years, and old friends had sometimes proved unkind.

But some had been true—Percy Florence and those that she had lost. She might see them at the last, 'darkly, fearfully afar'; only Shelley bright and clear before her eyes, as he had been in life, and about him the shadows of other forms, Albè, Edward,

¹ Mary died at her house in Chester Square on Feb. 1st, 1851. A letter from Sir Percy to Isabel Booth, Jan. 3rd, states that paralysis set in during the last weeks of her illness. In another letter after her death he says: '... One morning some time before she was very ill, she made her wishes known to us—and though she left no will,—still I shall be glad to comply with them. She wished you to have £50 per annum and also that you should have a suit of mourning sent you. . . .' Bodleian MSS. D. 5.

Godwin. And Willmouse, darling Willmouse, how clearly his little face shone out! Shelley and Willmouse; the mist could not envelop them; and where it cleared were other faces, Fanny, Clara, Maria. They would welcome her and she was ready: the years since 1822 had been long.

'We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.'

¹My Dear Mrs. Trelawny,

Nice. February 24th 1850.

I received your letter just as I was leaving England, and it gave me great pleasure—being a sincere proof that it gives you pleasure to hear from me, and that you have not forgotten me. I had always, so to speak, a natural inclination for you—and though I appreciated the motives that made Trelawny and yourself keep me at a distance, I was not reconciled to the fact. To hear that all is well with you is a happiness which I hope you will frequently let me have. I should have written to you before, but I have suffered so much anxiety and ill health all the winter, that I for ever deferred writing until a better day. The winter everywhere had been severe, and from all I hear was worse at Rome and Naples than here—the peculiarity of the Nicard climate is the absence of rain and the extreme dryness of the atmosphere which renders it exciting. I felt this very painfully when I first came; but the effect has worn off and I am getting my health and strength again. The Spring has come on us like a sudden leap to summer, so bright and warm. We had not settled whither to go when we left England and were most inclined to the south of Spain, but travelling made Jane suffer so very much that we were soon forced to select the nearest spot that promised a mild winter—this place is as far south as Tuscany, and though I should not recommend it to a consumptive person, it has suited us.—Jane is now much better and we begin to hope—what we long despaired of—that she will entirely throw off her illness. She and Percy amuse themselves by painting and sketching, and are as happy as possible. They suit so entirely—both being absolutely devoid of every tinge of worldliness and worldly tastes—both having cheerful tempers and affectionate hearts. Indeed Jane is the very ideal of woman, gentle, soft, yet very vivacious, when well, even to high, lively spirits—both wearing the heart upon the sleeve—but both having

¹ Unpublished, from Boscombe MSS. A.

the precious instinct of avoiding pecking daws, and of keeping off ill-conditioned wasps. I never deserved so much peace and happiness as I enjoy with them—illness has been the dark shadow, and I tremble to think what other may cover our sun when that, as looks likely, is withdrawn.

We think of returning in April—for we left England at a very inconvenient time for our affairs. I only wish I could look forward to a stationary abode at Field Place,—but it is so low and damp that it requires to have been born there to flourish. I own I envy you your country—Ill as I was when in Monmouthshire, I never enjoyed a place more—the scenery is so lovely and so cheerful. The vale of Usk appeared to me a spot to choose out of all England to live in—and then I was quite ignorant of your being there.

I do not know that I can amuse you with any gossip about acquaintance, for indeed one does not like to put in writing the little fault-finding and *tracasserie* that mixes up in social intercourse. I can only say that Sussex offers no charms to us whatever in the way of society, but that we have had little to do with it—you must not think with all this we do not like Field Place—it is anything but a country seat of any mark whatever; it is old fashioned and with few rooms—so better suited to our fortunes—but it has a homely and comfortable feeling about it—and that makes it very pleasant. We have but one objection to it—its being in a hole, in a clay soil.

I enclose 3 lines to your husband to ask him to do something for me which I wish to be done *very much*¹—and what more do I say—this seems so selfish a letter—let yours be the same—as regards yourself—tell me of your house—your children, your garden, your occupations. I hope the sun is shining on you as cheerfully as it does on me—beaming on the bright sea—the excursions about here among the hills and by the shore are very beautiful, it has not the verdure of Usk, olives being the chief tree—but they are large and tall here—and the pure bright atmosphere gives colours to all that compensate for the absence of emerald green.

Adieu,

Affly yours,

MARY SHELLEY.

¹ This must be a request for the return of her portrait by Miss Curran, which Trelawny took to look after for her at Casa Magni. See p. 286, where Lady Shelley refers to his refusal to return it.

III

SHELLEY'S SON

Boscombe Manor. Biographers of Shelley. Family Life.
London Friends.



Boscombe Manor

IN her letter to Augusta Trelawny, Mary Shelley had referred to the situation and the clay soil of Field Place, the Shelley home in Sussex, not suiting either her or her daughter-in-law, and in 1849 it was decided to move to Boscombe Manor, near Bournemouth.

¹In those days the land was of no particular value,—my great-uncle might have bought the West Cliff for £300—and Bournemouth only existed as a small township of a few thatched houses. Where the arcade now stands was a rustic bridge over the Bourne, a tiny streamlet that flows through the gardens and gives its name to the great borough of to-day. Dark pine woods divided it from Boscombe and through these my Mother used to ride her pony. Boscombe itself was a small house looking into a potato field which was afterwards made into the lawn. . . .

In 1911 the estate was sold for 'development' into 350 villas and the house, which had been completely transformed by the additions that the Shelleys made to it, turned into a girls' school, so that the pines that survive now in the grounds have few fellows outside to greet them above the cluster of buildings and the attendant clamour of a prosperous sea-side resort.

Even before [Lady Shelley's] death, much of the original estate had been sold and built over. Delightful spots would suddenly be transformed into villa gardens, but the most lovely parts of the wood remained intact—the green walk, the heathery walk near the sandhills where the snakes loved to bask, the secluded patch known as the 'Dogs' Cemetery' where the household pets were buried, the deep stretches of bracken, the rhododendron groves where mauve flowers hung in June like fairy lamps.

¹ This and the following extracts are from an account of Boscombe written in 1911 by the Hon. Mrs. F. E. Bray, the great-niece of Jane, Lady Shelley.



LADY SHELLEY WITH SHELLEY'S SISTERS

On the back of this photograph taken by Sir Percy Florence Shelley is written : 'L to R. Miss Shelley. Lady Shelley. Miss Margaret Shelley. Miss Shelley (Hellen) very fair, blue eyes, and tall, very slim. Miss Margaret Shelley, deep blue eyes, dark hair, and shorter than her sister. 186-. The dog Vispo, Percy's pet.'

Two places in Boscombe Manor hold in retrospect an interest and a charm that they had when friends and visitors were admitted to them in the lifetime of their owner: the private theatre and the 'Sanctum' where the relics of Shelley and Mary Shelley were preserved.

In the boudoir was a recess known as the Sanctum, whereof the ceiling was painted with stars, under which we children talked in awed whispers, partly I think, because of the night effect, but chiefly on account of the Shelley relics that lay there, whereby as small children we become familiar with the mysterious power of things dead hands have handled. There were two cases containing Shelley MSS. bound in green volumes. The tops of these cases were of glass and covered with Roman satin of a peculiar apricot hue which reminds me quite discrepantly of nectarines. Beneath the covers lay the relics¹—the miniature of Shelley by the Duc de Montpensier, the Sophocles in his hand when he was drowned, bracelets of Mary Wollstonecraft's hair, and a miniature of fair little 'Willmouse', who died, besides many other things, all very familiar and real to us as far back as I can remember. On the wall hung a case containing locks of hair of the poet and various of his friends and contemporaries. On the mantelpiece were some Etruscan and Greek figures and tear-bottles, and over them hung the picture of Mary Shelley now in the National Portrait Gallery. It is by Rothwell, no great master, though it is an excellent example of his work, and reveals the sweet-faced, refined woman that she was, her hair neatly parted and bound by a circlet inlaid with one stone above the forehead. Behind there is a slight indication of a flame burning possibly over some city, perhaps Shelley's spirit hovering above Eternal Rome. I remember this flame was discovered by an accident, for the picture was sent into Bournemouth for repair, and nearly ruined by varnish and repainting, so that Buttery had to restore it, which he did so excellently that many hitherto undiscovered beauties were revealed.

In the Sanctum also hung Miss Curran's picture of the poet, an unfinished portrait of no great merit as a painting; but of unique interest as being the only authentic portrait of the poet except the

¹ A copy of the miniature, the Sophocles, and the bracelets are exhibited at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Duc de Montpensier's pencilled drawing. Miss Curran put it into the fire, wholly dissatisfied with it, but luckily withdrew it in a repentant mood. It still shows marks of the flames. It is now at the National Portrait Gallery. It is very like the family and must have been a good likeness. At the end of the Sanctum stood the original for Weekes' Monument in the Priory at Christchurch.¹

As earlier accounts of him as a young man showed, Sir Percy's interests were not pre-eminently literary, and in middle age it was to theatricals and painting that he devoted most of his time. Besides the private theatre at Boscombe he made one in Tite Street, Chelsea, when he went to live at Shelley House, built for him on the Embankment in 1877. Irving, the Trees, the Kendals, and other actors of the day were often in the audience and occasionally played in the productions directed by their host before drop-scenes that he had painted.²

In the early days of Boscombe, theatricals were a great feature and one which made the house remarkable. In later times, they grew larger and more professional and were consequently less amusing to the family. My great-uncle frequently wrote the music

¹ According to Lady Shelley's letter (p. 287) Trelawny's portrait also hung in the Sanctum, but in later days Mrs. Bray remembers it on the wall of a glass-covered landing leading out of the Sanctum down into the Conservatory.

In a dressing-case of Mary's that is still preserved, there are, among odd trinkets, locks of hair that she had cut from the heads of the babies, Clara and William, and wrapped in pieces of paper an inch square with Italian inscriptions in tiny writing.

I have always understood that Shelley's heart was preserved with fine linen about it, in a leather-bound copy of *Adonais* and that it was buried later in Lady Shelley's grave.

² Unfortunately none of this scenery has been preserved. In the British Museum are copies of two of the plays that he wrote, *A Fairy Tale*, 1871 (B.M. 11781. cc. 32), and, in conjunction with W. Wingfield, *Hidden Treasure*, a melodrama in three acts first produced 1859 (B.M. 11779. g. 1).

Sir Percy was involved in a lawsuit when his neighbour, Slingsby-Bethell, informed against him for selling tickets without a licence for a charitable performance at this theatre in 1882 (*The Cousins*, for the School of Dramatic Art). He was fined a shilling by the magistrates, and on appeal the conviction was affirmed by Chief Justice Coleridge. The case was important for the ruling it established. The two brothers, ancestors respectively of the Michel-Grove and Castle Goring branches of the Shelley family, had a legal dispute over theatrical matters in the reign of Elizabeth.

and the play itself besides painting the scenery, which he did exceedingly well. Indeed, he largely taught Harker, now (1911) scene painter at His Majesty's. He might have remained longer at Boscombe had he not one day, with the aid of some white paint, given all the Italian greyhounds ribs, and made them run across the lawn as skeletons.

. . . Grannie [Lady Shelley] and Percy were themselves both excellent actors. Grannie in particular, was supposed to be equal to many professionals, and might easily have made her name on the stage. She was very like Mrs. Jordan and Irving once gave her a theatrical ring that had belonged to Mrs. Siddons, as he said she alone was worthy of it. . . . In my day the stage was usually covered by the drop-scene painted by Percy of the poet's last home at the Casa Magni. It looked very lovely with the sea lapping the terrace, instead of the modern road, and behind lay olive yards where now are noisy villas. Behind the stage were marvellous cellars and delightful staircases filled with dusty ropes, in the uses whereof we used to be instructed by Somers, who had been stage carpenter in the old days. The real meaning of these mysteries never prevented my imagining these regions to be the caves of Aladdin. From the stage, of course, opened the green room, afterwards the smoking room, which even to the last had a 'green' smell, i.e. a smell of mustiness, size, and trap doors delightful to the young. Beyond was the Barber's Shop, which I always connected, not with wigs or hair of any sort, but with Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. . . .

Among neighbours who came later to Boscombe were Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff, related to Mary Shelley's friends the Robinsons, who bought an estate in order to qualify to be Member for Christchurch, the Lambs and the Pophams, and later the Henry Reeves and the Henry Taylors.

If his father had knocked down the man who was ill-treating his horse and had carried the mule into Charenton, so Sir Percy took up the cause of the overworked little beasts who struggled up the Bournemouth hills from the shore, and with Sir Henry Taylor organized a donkey fête in 1882, to which Basil Wilberforce, later Archdeacon of Westminster and

Chaplain to the House of Commons, was invited. '... I love a donkey show', he replied, 'and go to so many that a four-legged one would be a relief.'¹

Robert Louis Stevenson and his wife were frequent visitors to Boscombe, and the dedication of *The Master of Ballantrae* bears witness to memorable days on the Shelleys' yacht. Of his likeness to the poet Stevenson wrote to Lady Taylor, after the publication of Dowden's *Life*:² '... I was uneasy^a at my resemblances to Shelley; I seem but a Shelley with less will^b and no genius; though I have had the fortune to live longer and (partly) to grow up.'

Biographers of Shelley.

Sir Percy inherited from his mother a strong distaste for what we should now call 'publicity', and gossip-mongers were sent empty away; but perpetual offers of forged letters and the publication of unreliable biographies decided him, in 1857, that it was time for an authoritative life of his father to be undertaken from the material in his possession. Accordingly he approached Hogg, and, as Lady Shelley says in the *Memorials*, 'placed the documents in our possession at the disposal of a gentleman whose literary habits and early knowledge of the poet seemed to point him out as the most fitting person to bring them to the notice of the public'. The tone of the letters (reproduced pp. 288-91) addressed to Lady Shelley during the writing of the book should, perhaps, have warned her that Hogg's banter was more than skin-deep, but 'we saw the book for the first time when it was given to the world... and it was with the most painful feelings of dismay that we perused what we could only look upon as a fantastic caricature, going forth to

¹ From *Guests and Memories*, Una Taylor.

² Quoted from *Guests and Memories*, Una Taylor.

(a) 'weary', in *Letters of R. L. Stevenson*, edited by Sidney Colvin, vol. ii, p. 305. (b) 'oil' in *Letters*. Stevenson suggested lines for the Shelley Memorial at Oxford. See two letters to Lady Shelley, Appendix C.

the public with my apparent sanction, for it was dedicated to myself'.¹

An injunction to restrain Hogg from publishing any further volumes was obtained, with the concurrence of Peacock, Shelley's literary executor, and the third volume which was already completed was never given to the world and is now lost. What treasure trove it would be! For, at this distance, it is possible to appreciate the liveliness of Hogg's account of Shelley in his youth while discounting his comments, even his falsifications; it is a 'speaking likeness' of biography, but to the poet's son the banter, the exaggeration, and the irrelevances were naturally unforgivable.

Meanwhile, between 1858 and 1869 Peacock was contributing articles on Shelley to *Fraser's Magazine*, but, though methodical and documented, they did not please the Shelleys, who considered that his account of Harriet prejudiced the Separation question. In Lady Shelley's written notes to *Shelley and Mary* (see p. 269) she interpreted this championship as that of an interested party, but her evidence cannot be accepted as conclusive.²

The question of the separation from Harriet was bound to be the touchstone by which the Shelleys judged a biography, and if Lady Shelley considered that Peacock had been a partisan of Harriet, Sir Percy was equally severe in his criticism of W. M. Rossetti for the opposite treatment of her in his *Memoir*,

¹ Lady Shelley appealed to Leigh Hunt to vindicate the memory of his friend. His article in *The Spectator*, Aug. 13th, 1859, must have been almost his last word in print, as he died Aug. 28th, 1859. See Leigh Hunt's letter on Hogg's *Life of Shelley*, with other papers, privately printed, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1927, British Museum.

In *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (J. M. Dent, 1933), the editor, Mr. Humbert Wolfe, says in the Introduction about this passage: 'Moreover, though the Shelley family might rejoice in Bysshe's posthumous fame, their conduct to him during his life does not excite our lively sympathy.' But Lady Shelley was the poet's daughter-in-law, not his mother!

The letters of Shelley which Hogg deliberately transcribed wrongly are given with the corrections made by Garnett from the originals in an Appendix to Ingpen's edition of the letters.

² See Garnett's view in *Letters about Shelley*, p. 124.

1869. (Rossetti had deliberately avoided consulting the family before writing.)

¹My dear Sir, It is with great reluctance that I take pen in hand to express disapprobation of any portion of the labours of a gentleman who has evidently put his heart and soul in the work of doing honour to my father and whose ambition most certainly is to glorify to the utmost the genius of Shelley. At the same time I suppose that Mr. Rossetti will not dislike to hear a voice he has not yet heard with reference to one or two points . . . [Harriet; a long story out of nothing]. Of course there *is* a long story. But as Mr. Rossetti could not tell it for the very good reason that he did not know it—it would have been better if he had imitated the editor of the Shelley Memorials or rather copied the passage which occurs in that book at the bottom of page 64 and the top of page 65. . . .

The statement by Peacock when describing the personal appearance that the nose was slightly turned up is quite devoid of foundation—as anybody who knows the family would guarantee. The pencil [drawing] of my father when 12 years old done by the Duke de Montpensier would be quite enough to settle that point.

Secondly I regret to find that the biographer has followed a *fashion come up within the last year rather more closely than is warranted by good taste*. I mean the pandering to the lower taste of a part of the public by going with minuteness into subjects which promise a flavour of impropriety. The mention of Miss Clairmont might just as well have been omitted. But with respect to Harriet the writer without any authority for it makes use of an unpardonable expression. Where he talks of a schoolgirl of 16 as being quite ready to be a man's mistress perhaps Mr. Rossetti is not aware that the first Mrs. Shelley's daughter, Ianthe, is living. . . .

Regard for the feelings of Ianthe Esdaile had made Mary Shelley unwilling to publish her account of the separation in her lifetime, and this reluctance was shared by her son. In the *Memorials* which Lady Shelley prepared for publication in 1859 she says, 'We who bear his name, and are of his family, have in our possession papers written by his own hand, which

¹ From a copy of a letter made in Sir Percy's handwriting. Boscombe MSS. A.

in after years may make the story of his life complete and which few now living have ever perused.'

This *may* refer to Shelley's letter to Mary of December 16th, 1816,¹ from which an important paragraph concerning Harriet and her acquaintance with a groom of the name of Smith is omitted by Dowden and by Mrs. Marshall. Dr. Garnett thought that the real cause of the separation was Harriet's intemperance, and that Godwin's story of her infidelity with Major Ryan four months before the separation was unfounded. This would not, of course, affect the truth of the later accusation, or Shelley's belief in either. To 'chatter about Harriet' there is no end, but in this book I have tried to deal with the separation simply as it appeared to Mary and Shelley at the time.

On the appearance of Trelawny's second Memoirs, the *Records*, in 1878, Lady Shelley wrote him a spirited and dignified defence of Mary Shelley which I have reproduced in full, pp. 285-7. I have also given there Trelawny's letter refusing her invitation to join Hogg and Peacock in a reunion of the poet's three old friends at Boscombe in 1857. Trelawny harboured an unreasonable prejudice against Lady Shelley, not to the credit of his good sense.

Dissatisfied and disappointed with Hogg, Peacock, and Trelawny, and realizing that partiality would be ascribed to the *Memorials*, the Shelleys decided to seek an outside biographer. Unfortunately Dr. Garnett was too busy at the British Museum to undertake the work, but when Professor Dowden² of Dublin was decided upon, he helped him generously with advice and information and had occasionally to act as mediator between Biographer and Family. Not without reason, whether the literary sense was hereditary or not, Sir Percy objected to

¹ By courtesy of the late T. J. Wise I have reproduced this letter in full from the facsimile reproduced in the catalogue of *A Shelley Library*. See pages 75-7.

² Dowden's biography was published in 1886. *Shelley and Mary* (see Preface, and Appendix A) was privately printed in 1882. Dowden and Mrs. Marshall appear to have been largely dependent on its text rather than on originals.

Dowden's circumlocutions: why 'the Sage' and 'the Philosopher'; why not 'Godwin'? 'Please translate', he writes to Garnett, "affection clarified from the grossness of spurious idealisings and vain hopes may root itself in earth or rise to upper air". Of course these words are in a dictionary but not tacked together to make any meaning.' The *Letters about Shelley* show that Dowden took Sir Percy's criticisms in good part.¹ 'I shall reform my phrases and nicely derange my epitaphs (as Mrs. Malaprop puts it) so as to be less like Hogg and Jeaffreson in this particular'; but he insisted on allowing his 'mingled feeling of like and dislike towards Godwin' to appear and would not be influenced on the Separation question. On this point Garnett wrote to Sir Percy:

²In estimating Professor Dowden's work, we must always remember that he is not writing as an advocate, as I did in the *Relics*, but as an historian: and that it is a great gain to have the favourable verdict of a competent and impartial judge: even if it does not go quite so far as one could wish.

Family Life.

Sir Percy Florence and Lady Shelley had no children, but adopted as an infant Lady Shelley's niece, Bessie Florence Gibson, who is variously referred to in Sir Percy's diaries as Floss, φλος and φ. When she married she lived in Ovington Gardens, near enough to the Shelleys for daily visits, and with her family came frequently to Boscombe, which 'Grannie' (Lady Shelley) invested with a special magic for the children. Mrs. Bray writes:

... Boscombe to us is inextricably bound up with the personality of our 'Grannie'. She was the most wonderful Grannie ever known to children. To grown-up people she was hardly less remarkable. She died in 1899 when I was 15 and she 79, so that I never remember her as anything but old, which for a Grannie is as it should be. To the end she retained her extraordinary vitality in which lay one of the great secrets of her charm. She was intensely alive, and delighted

¹ *Letters about Shelley*, edited by R. S. Garnett, 1917.

² Unpublished, Boscombe MSS. A.



LADY SHELLEY

From a photograph taken about 1880

in living. She talked delightfully of her youth, but she enjoyed her age; she enjoyed being 'a Grannie'.

She was short and stout, like most of her family, but her features were large, and rather masculine. I have heard many people say she was better looking as an old woman than she had ever been as a young one. Her forehead and nose were all in one, the nostrils very finely and boldly cut; her eyes were grey hazel; and her mouth large and very mobile, with rather thin lips, like that of Ellen Terry. . . . Her hair was thick and very white and silvery. She had worn it cut short ever since a yachting accident in 1870, which had twisted her neck and caused her great subsequent pain. When she was fatigued her head used to turn more to the left side. We always knew it to be a sign that Grannie was tired.

Her clothes invariably consisted of a kind of black satin or silk jacket cut very long over a petticoat of the same material; trimmed at the neck, cuffs, and down the front with lace. She wore a black lace cap, with strings. Sometimes on great and rare occasions, she would wear pearly grey and a white lace cap which suited her admirably for she had a lovely complexion. She always pinned her caps with an amethyst brooch, which was her favourite stone. When she drove out she wore a large bonnet, without a veil, a 'mantle', and beautiful soft suède gloves of grey. She liked everything very soft and delicate, the more so as she got older and her hands crippled with gout, which made it difficult for her to wear any but the largest rings. She was not fond of jewelry and had little of any value, but she liked pretty things, and would often wear some imitation trinket which she had got because it pleased her fancy. Nothing ever looked sham or tawdry on her. Her invariable jewels were Mary Wollstonecraft's amethyst ring and a diamond keeper, and on her little finger a cameo ring that had belonged to the poet Shelley, which she valued more than all her possessions. Besides her rings and her brooch, she wore a very large repeater watch on a gold chain from which hung certain coral charms and a little gold hat and whistle, dearly loved by us children. . . .

Sir Percy Florence was essentially a shy man, but in his wife he had found a woman who had a charm of personality and an embracing sympathy that created for him exactly that congenial environment in which he could be at his best. Richard

Garnett called him 'this most gentle and lovable man, the inheritor of most of his father's fine qualities and of many of his tastes and accomplishments'; and Stevenson wrote, 'No one could think of him as old, he had the morning dew upon his spirit: a boy and a poet—so a poet's son—until the last.'

He had his father's schoolboy enthusiasm for scientific experiments:

¹May 23rd, 1879. Employed all the morning in making failures with Swan's dry Plates. . . .

May 30th. One Collodion photo this morning with Shelley-boy^a in it. In the afternoon we walked to Bournemouth and I bought the skeleton of an old Bone-shaker at Morgan for the purpose of experimenting in the manufacture of a tricycle with a new idea.

He was a pioneer of bicycle-riding, and attended Committee meetings of the B.B.C. (Bournemouth Bicycle Club), and would cycle vigorously round the drive with his 'son-in-law', or time himself as he rode through the country roads to Bournemouth. His London diary records inspection of the latest models at bicycle-shops (the 'Arab', the 'Pony', and the 'Challenge 46') and a visit to the Oval (Oct. 19th, 1877) 'to see some bicycle racing for the benefit of the Aberavon Explosion Fund, 3,000 present'.

The other chief interest, whose early manifestation had filled his mother with an alarm that she tried to hide, was sailing, and in his yacht *The Wren* (from one of Lady Shelley's several 'nicknames') he went on long cruises and sailed about the coast, with a visit to Cowes every year.² In his diaries, true mark of a sailor, there is recorded each day, whether at Boscombe or in London, the prevailing wind and the height of the barometer. These daily records, not Journals in the sense that his parents would have known, belong to a comparatively late period in

¹ Diary extracts are from Boscombe MSS. A.

^a Mrs. Bray writes: 'The name Shelley in preference to Percy was given by my great-aunt to several of her god-children. My eldest brother was christened Shelley and Shelley-boy was a pet name for him.'

² Other yachts, some built at Poole, were the *Nuken*, the *Flirt*, the *Enchantress*, and lastly the *Oceana*.

life, but they show a man of wide interests and at the same time human sympathies; he is precise in his accounts, detailing items for the yacht or household expenditure ('April 1st, 1879. To-day is Shelley's 7th birthday and I tipped him a sov.'), but a sense of humour is not to be kept out. With whimsical exactitude he notes:

November 1st, 1878. Nin¹ called on Lady Grant. Sir Patrick took her out to see the new moon which however is now a week old. Weather slightly warmer—

and he 'sees in' the New Year when his wife is ill:

December 31st, 1879. . . . They lit the fire in the warming apparatus in the Theatre this evening and as we did not go to sleep till the clocks announced the commencement of 1880, I shared Nin's evening 'physic' milk and *eau de vie*—for the purpose of drinking in the New Year !!!

London Friends.

The picture that emerges from the London entries shows a life of cultivated leisure typical of the age, which makes it seem much farther removed from our own time than the more troublous days that Shelley himself had known when the century was younger; Sir Percy walks with pedometer carefully fixed to lunch at one of his Clubs, the Garrick or the Beefsteak; joins his wife in the afternoon to pay the calls that the telephone has now displaced, in the landau or the brougham and pair; dines out in the evening or has an early meal at home before the theatre.

January 4th. Dined at six and Nin and I went after to Opera Comique. Blunt's piece, 'Dora's dream'—trash. 'The Sorcerer' by Gilbert, good for libretto, but the music of Sullivan is commonplace.

January 12th. Dined at six and went to see first representation of 'Diplomacy' at the Prince of Wales. It was a great success, the Kendals acting splendidly, so also D. Clayton and Bancroft.

At a dinner party with the Speddings, besides 'Mr. Froude,

¹ 'Nin' is a name for Lady Shelley.

the Historian', of whom the Shelleys were warm partisans, they meet 'Robert Browning, Kegan Paul, Spring Rice (Lady Taylor's brother)'.

The Friths were great friends, and φλος is in No. 2 of Frith's five pictures, 'The Gambler's Progress'.

November 24th, 1876. . . . Dined at the Friths. Calderon, Rhoda Broughton, Burnand were there—first meeting of the last two since the appearance of Burnand's parodies of R. Broughton's novels in Punch.

Monday, March 18th, 1878. . . . Went to dinner to Lecky's. James and Miss Spedding were there, also Tennyson who recited his poem of the Revenge in an extraordinarily sing-song way.

Through Hamilton Aidé the Shelleys met many of the artists of the period; among them Whistler, whom Sir Percy calls on in one of his 'thin times'.

January 28th, 1879. . . . On my way home paid my first visit to Whistler, found him etching in his large studio lighted by two candles.

On Sundays they would go to hear well-known preachers, regardless of denomination:

December 31st. 'The Grove'. Nin and Nellie [Ricketts] went in Clarence to Bedford Chapel, Bloomsbury Square to hear Stopford Brook.

September 9th, 1877. Nin and I went in the cab to the Chapel at Boscombe. G. MacDonald preached. He has a very fine delivery—but repeated himself a little—*extempore*.

And the entry for Thursday, December 19th, 1878, provides a curious link between the Romantic Revival and the Nineties:

. . . At 4.30 in the Brougham, changed books at Smiths and got nine volumes from the London Library, sent the books home in the Brougham, and walked to H. Aidé, found there a Major Earle-Harrison and a prize poet of Oxford, *Wylde*, I think was the name.¹

¹ This is clearly Oscar Wilde, who won the Newdigate in 1878 with *Ravenna*.



SIR PERCY FLORENCE SHELLEY

From a photograph taken about 1880

Old friends were not neglected. Lady Shelley tried to gather under her roof Trelawny, Peacock, and Hogg: the Robinsons often stayed, and Charles Esdaile, son of Ianthe, came with his wife. An entry, November 7th, 1878, records a reconciliation at Shelley House between the Aunts¹ and Mrs. Shelley who had not met for more than thirty years. 'Hellen, Margaret, and Nin are much pleased.'

After the death of Sir Percy Florence in December 1889, Lady Shelley devoted herself more assiduously than ever to the care of her precious inheritance: she prepared lists of the letters and manuscripts and made the arrangements for their disposal to which reference has been made in the Preface.² She herself died in 1899. Sir Henry Taylor spoke of her 'rose-leaf' charm, but it is the tribute to her from Mary Shelley in the letter to Augusta Trelawny that she would have wanted for her epitaph—evidence of the love she won from her husband's mother and Shelley's wife. 'They suit so entirely—both being absolutely devoid of every tinge of worldliness and worldly tastes—both having cheerful tempers and affectionate hearts. Indeed, Jane is the very ideal of woman. . . .'

¹ Shelley's sisters, Hellen and Margaret. See Hogg's references, pp. 289-90. Mrs. Shelley was the wife of John Shelley, the poet's brother, from whom the present heir is descended.

² The Memorial to Shelley at University College, Oxford, was erected in 1893. At the suggestion of Dr. Jowett, Master of Balliol, Lady Shelley offered to the College in December 1891 'a beautiful work in marble and bronze by Onslow Ford' provided it were erected 'in a suitable position and light'. The offer was readily accepted and the present site chosen by Onslow Ford.

According to *The Times*, June 15th, 1893, there were present Lady Shelley, the Bishop of Southwark, the Master of University (Dr. Bright), the Master of Balliol (Professor Jowett), Sir William Markby, the Warden of All Souls, the President of Magdalen, the Warden of Merton, the Rector of Exeter, Mr. Arthur Sidgwick, Mr. Onslow Ford, Canon St. John, Dr. Garnett, Mr. William Esdaile, Mr. Hamilton Aidé, Mr. Basil Champneys (who designed the Chamber in which the Memorial is placed), and Mr. H. M. Burge. (Professor) Ernest de Selincourt was present, representing the undergraduates.

I am indebted to Dr. Poynton, late Master of University College, for these particulars.

APPENDIXES

- A. 'SHELLEY AND MARY.' Preface and manuscript note.
- B. THE JOURNAL. Description of the volumes.
- C. UNPUBLISHED LETTERS. Coleridge to Godwin; Shelley to Hogg; Mrs. Hoppner to Mary Shelley; Allegra to Byron; Mary Shelley to John Murray; Trelawny and Lady Shelley; Hogg to Lady Shelley; Sir Percy Shelley to Hogg; Robert Louis Stevenson to Lady Shelley.
- D. POEMS. 'The Choice' and other Poems.
- E. PROSE WORKS. 'Frankenstein' and other novels. Title-pages of prose works.

APPENDIX A
'SHELLEY AND MARY'

(Privately printed 1882)

PREFACE

'THESE volumes, containing 1,243 pages, have been prepared for the press by Lady Shelley, with the object of preserving from destruction the precious records in her possession. They comprise all the letters and other documents of a biographical character at present in the hands of Shelley's representatives.

'This book cannot be regarded as final or exhaustive, for the correspondence of Shelley and Mary Shelley was varied and copious, and it is probable that even the present extensive collection may receive additions which will ultimately render it complete.

PERCY F. SHELLEY.'

Shelley House, Chelsea Embankment.
January 1st. 1882

*MS. addition on fly-leaves of SHELLEY AND MARY made by
Lady Shelley in all copies*

Shelley's separation from his first wife.

Although from the first much discomfort had at times arisen, yet it does not seem that any serious estrangement occurred till after the Shelleys' journey to Edinburgh in October 1813.

They were accompanied on that occasion by Mr. Peacock, with whom until that time they were but slightly acquainted.

Peacock was just then in money difficulties and was glad to take advantage of the Shelleys' kindness, which he very ill requited—We have every reason to associate Mr. Peacock with the first serious estrangement—¹

¹ Hogg was responsible for suggesting this accusation to the Shelleys. In copies of Memoranda addressed to Garnett, Sir Percy says, 'If what Hogg printed is to be believed and quoted, what he told Lady Shelley must also be quoted'; 'Peacock was Harriet's lover; this was positive information from Hogg to Lady S. Therefore Peacock ought not to be credited or quoted.' The 'suspicious circumstances' quoted are: '(1) Peacock's anxiety to take out an

After their return to London at the end of November or beginning of December the Shelleys seem to have been very little together—In June 1814 Harriet went to Bath and an end had come to all communion between Shelley and Harriet as husband and wife.

Statements as to Harriet's faithlessness to Shelley having been made by others, it is right to give the exact evidence on the matter.

Miss Clairmont in her papers, now in possession of Mr. Buxton Forman, states that she had it from Mary's own lips, that Harriet had been faithless to him with a Major Ryan.

Godwin in a letter to his friend, Mr. Baxter, stated that he had evidence, apart from Shelley, that this had occurred some time before the separation, in fact before Shelley suspected it.

The only point requiring to be clearly proved, however, is, that to Shelley himself, the evidence was absolutely conclusive and that it was at once the cause and the justification of the whole action with regard to the separation.

Shelley placed Harriet under the protection of her parents, leaving the child with her, at her request, and gave instructions that deeds should be prepared and a settlement made for her benefit. She was acquainted with his intention of going abroad, he corresponded with her during his absence and visited her on his return to England, and as late as December continued to take an affectionate interest in her welfare and exposed himself to no little inconvenience and danger of misconstruction in a generous endeavour to promote her well-being.

The motive of elopement on 28th July with Mary Godwin has been greatly misunderstood.

It has not unnaturally been supposed that Harriet was the person whose pursuit the fugitives were anxious to evade, but they had no idea of opposition or interference on her part.

The person whose pursuit they apprehended was Mrs. Godwin in conjunction against Hogg's book just arriving at that period of the history. His uncalled-for article in Fraser in defence of Harriet. (2) His declaration in my hearing that he hated Mary because she contradicted him and loved Harriet who had never done so—yet his professions of friendship to Mary (*whom he hated*) were very great, addressing her always as "his very dear friend". The reliability of any of Hogg's statements can be assessed from his own alterations of Shelley's letters and the 'fragment of a novel' inserted in his *Life*.

(Mary's stepmother) who actually did follow them to Calais—
Even her proceedings had no reference to Mary, but to her own
daughter (Jane Clairmont) who accompanied the travellers. (See
Garnett's *Relics of Shelley*.)

J. SHELLEY

Boscombe

Dec. 21st 1885.

APPENDIX B
DESCRIPTION OF
THE VOLUMES OF THE JOURNAL

Volume I.

July 28th, 1814–May 13th, 1815.

A pale-green cloth-bound book with darker leather-back rib. Figures and sums scribbled over covers. $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 5 in. and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep.

Label in left-hand cover:

Collard,
M. d. Papetier,
Rue neuve des Petits-Champs No. 69

and under, in Shelley's roughest writing:

'3 sous make 1 batz
 $6\frac{1}{2}$ make 1 franc
3 francs in one [illegible]
6 francs in a [house] light eater
39 bratz in liver and light eater
 $19\frac{1}{2}$ bratz in a murder bloody
bratz 2 swiss sous
1 bratz 1 liver and light eater.'

Volume II.

July 21st, 1816–June 7th, 1819.

Brown calf. $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $4\frac{3}{4}$ in. and 1 in. deep.

No mark of origin. Scribbling of figures and Shelley's trees. First eight pages have lists of books read from 1814 to 1818. On left hand of page 9:

'Journal 1816.

Begun July 21st 1816.

Ended with my happiness June 7th 1819."¹

The last entry is scrawled:

'Thursday 3rd. William is very ill but gets better towards the evening.
Miss C. calls—Friday 4th.'

¹ This refers to the death of William.

Beginning from the other end there are further lists of books, a laundry list and medicinal recipes, and a page devoted to the following items of expenditure:

Bracelets	6
Do. for C.	5
Bonnet	2
Shelley's cap	4
Shawl	2.5

Volume III.

August 4th, 1819–July 8th, 1822.

Calf bound in brownish-red with dark-green fly-leaves. 8 in. by 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. and 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. deep.

No mark of origin. First right-hand page:

‘Journal book.

Begun August 1819.’

There follows the poem ‘That time is gone for ever child’

The first entry, Wednesday 4th: ‘I begin my Journal on Shelley’s birthday.’

There are blank pages in the middle of the book. Reading from the back there are some Latin words and a heading in Shelley’s writing, ‘Sent to the Steamboat’, but nothing under it. A long extract from *Le Constitutionnel*, November 12th, 1821, praising Mavrocordato.

In Shelley’s writing more medical recipes and the two following quotations:

All. Liberty! liberty!

Duke. ‘Tis a substantial thing and not a word

Ye men of Naples (Double Marriage, Act. 5).^a

‘With books on their hands against glory, whereto they set their names.’
Sir P. Sydney D of Poetry.

There follow several other pages of miscellaneous quotations in Mary’s writing, then 48 pages copied from Williams’s Journal and an account of Trelawny’s funeral obsequies for Shelley and Williams.

(a) By Beaumont and Fletcher.

Volume IV.

October 2nd, 1822—January 30th, 1824.

Mottled brown cloth with calf edges. 8 in. by 6½ in. and ½ in. deep.

No mark of origin. On left page of cover:

‘The Journal of Sorrow

Begun 1822

But for my child it could not end too soon.’

1823 is called ‘the year following 1822’ and the first entry is on February 2nd.

1824 is ‘The second year after 1822’.

A quantity of pages are torn out at the end of the book. It is from this volume (pp. 106 seq.) that ‘The Choice’ and other poems quoted in Appendix D are taken.

Volume V.

September 7th, 1826—October 2nd, 1844.

Dull pink leather. 6¾ in. by 4½ in. and ½ in. deep.

The entries are almost entirely introspective with several pages of Italian.

June 30th, 1838, has an anecdote about Talleyrand:

‘Rosa and I breakfasted at Rogers to-day. He told me several anecdotes. One he told me to write down as he had not time. It was told him by Talleyrand. Napoleon ordered and arranged his battles from a distance; when on the spot the battle was instantly fought. At the time that the encampment was formed at Boulogne, Napoleon reviewed his troops. News came that the Austrians were in the advance. Napoleon set off instantly for Paris—and after two days proceeded travelling day and night to —. He was closeted with Talleyrand—he told him that there was to be a battle—he was studying his arrangements—when suddenly he felt ill; he had but time to say, ‘Lock the door’ and fell into a fit. Talleyrand did as he was desired. Berthier came to the door—no admittance—the Empress—the door was still unopened—for half an hour said Talleyrand I was there shut up with the Emperor before he recovered. Had he died, what would have been said or thought of me?’

The last third of the book is unwritten. The last entry is a quotation from Burke to his son, ‘Preserve always a habit of giving. . . .’

APPENDIX C

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

COLERIDGE TO GODWIN. <i>September 16th, 1800</i>	page 278
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MARY SHELLEY TO JOHN MURRAY. <i>Early 1828</i>	282
TRELAWNY TO LADY SHELLEY. <i>February 1857</i>	284
LADY SHELLEY TO TRELAWNY. <i>August 1878</i>	285
HOGG TO LADY SHELLEY. <i>April 20th, 1857—March 15th, 1858</i>	288
SIR PERCY SHELLEY TO HOGG. <i>May 13th, 1858</i>	292
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON TO LADY SHELLEY. <i>January 15th, 1890</i>	292
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COLERIDGE TO GODWIN¹

Dear Godwin,

September 16th [1800].

Is it in your power to remit me 10£? You may depend on its being redelivered to you on the first of next month. This I am afraid will prove an untimely application, but the matter is, that by the 1st October I shall have claim to as much money as I shall want—as the persons to whom I could with more propriety have addressed myself in the meantime than to you, opposed my settling in the North so strongly that I feel a great disinclination to write to them on any pecuniary embarrassment which they will attribute to my journey North and the consequent expenses. This no doubt is the remote cause; but the immediate cause was the unexpected *necessity* of paying an old Cambridge Debt which had pressed very little on my conscience, and intruded very rarely into my memory. However I was *forced* to part with eight pound at a very unseasonable time, for the day after, my wife presented Hartley with a little Brother. She is as well as any woman in her situation, and in this climate ever was or can be—the child is a very large one—she was brought to bed on Thursday night $\frac{1}{2}$ past 10. Will you come and stand God-father?

If it be out of your power, I pray you, give yourself no concern about it—somehow or other I shall rub through the ensuing fortnight—and regard this letter only as a proof that I esteem you so much as not to be ashamed of suffering you to know anything that befalls me.

Yours sincerely,

S. T. COLERIDGE.

SHELLEY TO HOGG²

My dear Hogg,

Monday May 8th 1817.

I send you Plutarch. Peacock is reading Lucian. My continental packet I regret to inform you is not yet arrived. But I have no doubt that it will be here by the time you visit us in the summer.

¹ Unpublished letter from Boscombe MSS. A. Printed by kind permission of the Rev. G. H. B. Coleridge.

² Unpublished, Boscombe MSS. A. The final paragraphs are given in Ingpen, Julian edition, vol. ix, p. 228.

I am in the midst of Apuleius. I never read a fictitious composition of such miraculous interest and beauty. I think generally it even surpasses Lucian and the story of Cupid and Psyche any imagination ever clothed in the language of man. Peacock is equally enchanted with it. For other aspects, I am not at the moment very classical. Every now and then I read a book in Homer and think it is since I saw you that I have read, on your recommendation, the tragedy of Alcestis. I remember now that it was exceedingly beautiful but the splendour of Apuleius eclipses all that I have read for the past year. This light will pass away and when I am at a sufficient distance from the new planet, the constellations of literature will reappear in their natural glory.

I wish you could contrive to make your visit here early. Hunt is with me at present and will remain at least three weeks. May Peacock expect you during that period?

My τέτροππος^a has been metamorphosed since you were here, into a featherless biped, he lives, and inhabits his father's house but he has ceased to creep. He walks now with great alacrity.

Very sincerely yours

P. B. SHELLEY.

Jefferson Hogg, 1 Garden Court.

MRS. HOPNER TO MARY SHELLEY¹

Venise le 6 Jan. 1819.

Ma chère Madame Shelley. J'espère que vous ne vous êtes pas alarmée de mon long silence. J'ai été si occupée avec mes deux enfants et les jours d'hiver sont si courts, que malgré le désir que j'avais de vous donner il y a déjà longtemps les nouvelles d'Allegra, je n'ai jamais pu y réussir et quoique j'aie commencé plusieurs lettres, je ne trouvais pas le tems de les finir, et je ne sais pas si je l'aurais jamais pu faire si je n'avais enfin pris des arrangements plus convenables à mes occupations; mais il y a à peu près quinze jours que j'ai trouvé une personne à laquelle je puis confier de soigner la petite, et cela du consentement de My Lord qui a cédé de bonne

(a) This must refer to the baby, William, who would now be 15 months old.

¹Quoted in part by Dowden, vol ii, p. 328. The French is old-fashioned.

grâce à mes raisons et n'exigea point de prendre l'enfant loin de moi, ce que je redoutais le plus en prenant une servante pour son compte, mais il m'était impossible d'y résister plus longtemps et coûte que coûte j'ai dû hasarder la chose, puisque je ne pouvais accoutumer la petite à ne pas se salir la nuit, car cela rendoit l'enfant malade et quand je devais me lever pour la changer, je me refroidissais tant que j'en devenais aussi malade. Ainsi je devais avoir une servante toute dévouée à elle et qui la lève la nuit pour lui faire faire son besoin aussi bien que le jour car cette pauvre petite souffre du froid d'une manière vraiment effrayante, elle est toujours gélée quoique la chambre où elle est, jour et nuit, soit bien chaude et que je l'aye toute habillée de flannelle, mais il n'y a moyen de la réchauffer, les mains et les pieds sont comme des morceaux de glace et sont toujours rouges comme du sang, je crains qu'elle aye déjà la même disposition que sa mère, puisque ordinairement les enfants de cet âge ont toujours chaud, mon petit brûle et est toujours gai et sautillant, et Allegra par contre est devenue tranquille et sérieuse comme une petite vieille, ce qui nous peine beaucoup, car cela la retarde dans tout, le petit dit déjà presque tous les mots que dit Allegra et à elle par contre nous ne pouvons apprendre à en dire d'autres malgré tous les moyens que nous prenons pour l'y engager, enfin il faut espérer qu'elle se changera pour son mieux quand il ne fera plus si froid; mais je crois toujours que c'est très malheureux que Miss Clairmont oblige cet enfant de vivre à Venise dont le climat est nuisible en tout au physique de la petite et vraiment, pour ce que fera son père, je trouve un peu triste d'y sacrifier l'enfant. My Lord continue de vivre dans une débauche affreuse qui tôt ou tard le mènera à sa ruine puis qu'il dépense au delà de son revenu. J'envoie Allegra aussi souvent que possible lui faire visite, mais comme il n'est visible qu'après 3 heures, c'est trop tard pour la petite. D'ailleurs quand elle va voir son papa, Madame la Boulangère^a s'en empare et lui donne à boire et à manger des choses qui font du mal à l'enfant de manière que je n'aime pas à l'envoyer.

Quant à moi, je voudrais faire tout ce qui est en mon pouvoir pour cette enfant que je voudrais bien volontiers rendre aussi heureuse que possible le tems qu'elle restera chez nous; car je crains qu'après elle devra toujours vivre avec des étrangers indifférents à son sort. My Lord bien certainement ne la rendra jamais plus à sa mère, ainsi

(a) La Fornarina, Byron's mistress at this time.

il n'y a rien de bon à espérer pour cette chère petite, peut-être la providence dans laquelle vous savez que j'ai beaucoup de Foi, pourvoira mieux que nous ne pouvons prévoir au bien de cet innocent petit être; mais il est tems de finir enfin à mon sujet, qui vous ennuyera, puisque je ne doute [*torn by seal*] un instant de la stupidité de toute ma lettre, que j'ai dû écrire en plusieurs reprises; mais vous prendrez la volonté pour la manque d'amabilité, en vous persuadant que je vous aime et serai toujours plutôt disposée de vous faire plaisir que de la peine. Ecrivez-moi, je vous prie et dites-moi comment vous vous trouvez à Naples. Nous mourrons presque de froid à Venise. Faites nos compliments affectueux de Mr. Hoppner et moi à votre Mari et Miss C. et croyez-moi pour la vie, votre affectionnée,

ISABELLE HOPPNER.

ALLEGRA TO BYRON¹

CHE FA IL MIO AMATO PAPPA IO STO
 COSI BENE E TANTO CONTENTA CHE
 NON PASSO SE NON INGRAZIARE IL SEM-
 PRE CARO MIO PAPPA CHE MI PRO-
 CURO UN TANTO BENE DA CUI IMPLORO
 LA SUA BENEDIZIONE, LA SUA ALLE-
 GRINA LO SALUTA DI CUORE

Cappucine Bagnacavallo 31 Luglio 1821.

Sua Deo, Serva

La Mdre. Aufr. Cappel.

¹ This note, hitherto unpublished, is in the Boscombe MSS. A. I am indebted for the following translation of the letter to the Marchese Origo, author of *Allegra* (Hogarth Press, 1935):

'What is my beloved Papa doing? I am so well and happy that I cannot but thank my ever-dear Papa who has procured me such happiness [or welfare] from whom I ask his blessing. His Allegra sends her loving greetings.'

MARY SHELLEY TO JOHN MURRAY¹

in answer to request for particulars of the 'heroines' of Byron's poems.²

Sunday morning,
Somerset St.

Dear Sir

The more I look over Lord Byron, the less do I see what I can say in illustration—historical, since the *Life* so copiously treats of them—for instance in *Don Juan*, the only things [*sic*] I can discover is in Canto IV cxi—

I knew one woman of that purple school
which is the Lady C. alluded to in the *Life*—Vol. II. 268. But as Lady Charlemont would recognize herself in such an assertion, it would not be right to put it in—and in Canto XIV c. where the dangerous passion arising from a game of billiards alludes to Lady F. W. W. the Heroine of the Bride—and the Ginevra of the Sonnets—Of the Poems to tell you that Florence is Mrs. Spencer Smith—is to tell you what you know already.

'When all around was dark and drear'
was to Mrs. Leigh

'Thou art not false but thou art fickle'
to Lady Oxford—

'Though the day of my destiny's over'
to Mrs. Leigh,—

'Well, thou art happy and I feel'
to Mary Chaworth

All this you know already—the feelings which gave rise to each poem, are so dwelt on in the Letters in Mr. Moore's *Life*—that there seems nothing left to say on that subject—and by printing the poems in a chronological order, you force on the reader's apprehension his state of mind when he wrote them [line crossed out]. The difficulty of clothing well his ideas, resulting from youth—though they found expression—which made the Hours of Idleness a failure. The depth of passion, nursed in solitude—and wild

¹ Hitherto unpublished, from British Museum MS. 38510, f. 56. (Miscellaneous letters purchased at Sotheby's, Mar. 22nd, 1911.)

² See page 200.

romantic scenery which breathes in his poem to Thirza^a—Who she was I do not know—I believe a cousin—at any rate she was a real person *decidedly*—and his feelings of misery on her death most real—I have heard him express the sensations of acute despair that produced those poems—and those ‘On a Cornelian heart that was broken’—Alone in Greece—his imagination imparted its fire to his feelings—and increased their impression on his own heart, as well as bestowing greater power of language and poetry—Returned to England and mingling with the world, a certain elegance mingled itself with his^b inspiration, and was diffused over his productions—remarkable specially in the ‘Bride’—Attached one after the other to women of fashion, his heroines displayed the delicacy and refinement of civilization.

When he quitted England, feeling himself wronged—an outcast and a mourner—his mind took on higher flight—It fed upon his regrets—and on his injuries—and Manfred and the 3rd. Canto of C.H. bear marks of solitary ruminations in wild scenery—detached from the spirit of fashion and the world—the gaieties and incorrectness of his Venetian Life breathed their Influence in Beppo and D. Juan. While solitary Lido—the moon-lit palaces—and the deserted ruined grandeurs of that city awakened the vein that displayed itself in the 4th Canto of C.H., in Mazeppa—in the Ode on Venice—

As his mind became more subdued—he became more critical—but his school of criticism being of the narrow order, it confined his faculties in his tragedies and Lord Byron became sententious and dull—except where character still shone forth—or where his critical ideas did not *interrupt* to mar. Sarcasm, before confined to his speech—now acquiring a sting from his susceptibility to the attacks made on him, induced him to write the Vision—and the Solitude in which he lived at Ravenna, gave birth to deep thoughts—to Cain and Heaven and Earth—

At Pisa he again belonged more to the English world—It did him little good—Werner he wrote chiefly because he had for many years thought it a good subject. He was very anxious to go on with D. Juan—and verging on the time when people revert to past feelings, instead of dwelling on the present—he amused himself by

(a) Probably Margaret Parker.

(b) The first sheet ends here, and the last two words are repeated at the beginning of the next.

descanting on English fashionable life—the last Cantos of D.J. were written with great speed—I copied them—there were scarcely any erasures and his chief delight was in sending them to me, to date the beginning and end with the name of the same month to prove how quickly they were composed—The opposition he met concerning the Liberal made him defy the world in D. Juan—then it made him despise the Liberal itself, so that when he wrote expressly for it, he wrote tamely—as is the case with the Island—But, in the end, this even gave him a disgust to Authorship—and he hurried to Greece to get a new name as a man of action—having arrived at the highest praise as a poet.

I have thus run through his works, to shew you what I think and know of the periods of their composition and the moods of mind in which they were written. If you think that a few lines of their history appended to each (which you could alter and frame as you like) would be of use, you can judge by this sketch, what my view would be, and I should be happy to furnish them—but still, I think, the life supplies the place of any such observations.

I write in haste. Next week I leave town for 3 Months—Would it not be better that I saw Mr. Finden before I went? I have been reading Contarini Fleming—who is the author?^a I like parts of it excessively—especially the 1st. volume. Thanks for the 6th. of the Life. Permit me to remind you that the copy you gave Mrs. Williams needs also a 6th. vol.

I am, dr. Sir,
Yrs. truly,

M. W. SHELLEY.

TRELAWNY TO LADY SHELLEY ¹

February 1857.

Usk

Monmouthshire.

My Dear Lady Shelley

To assemble together under your roof three of the Poets old friends, to tell their storeys is a pleasant dream. It is something similar to the plot of Bocacio's Decameron, but the Italian takes care to have youth and summer wr [weather]

(a) Benjamin Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield).

¹ Unpublished. Boscombe MSS. A.

I told Percy when he was here that I was too old and selfish to leave my den. In my youth I railed at age as hard and crabbed and so I find it.

I don't believe that either of the men you have mentioned will do what you wish. Indolence and excessive sensitiveness to public opinion will prevent it—as it has already done.

I am, Dear Lady Shelley
Your very Obligated
E. J. TRELAWNY.

LADY SHELLEY TO TRELAWNY IN DEFENCE OF
MARY SHELLEY¹

Boscombe Manor, Aug. '78.

Dear Mr. Trelawny.

I have read a letter of yours which appeared in the *Athenaeum*^a of last week—It seems to me that you are condemned in these latter days to listen to the whisperings of some misleading sprite who tells you wild tales of my unhallowed practices with departed spirits and invents descriptions of the arrangement of my furniture.

Take my advice and follow the example of a great man—Someone said to him, 'So and so declares that you did so and so. What am I to answer?' 'Say its a lie,' replied the Duke.

You have my authority for saying all such reports are utterly false.

After reading your letter in the *Athenaeum*, I naturally took from its resting place a portfolio marked Letters—E. J. Trelawny, a whole volume that I had often read before with much pleasure and interest—If possible they interested me more than ever. They were written when you were in the prime of life and are full of expressions of chivalrous affection and devotion to 'Mary dear' of whose intellectual gifts you had no mean opinion during all those years from 1822 to 1837.

¹ From copy in Boscombe MSS. A.

(a) The *Athenaeum*, Aug. 3rd, 1878. Trelawny had referred to Richard Garnett's article in the *Fortnightly*: 'As Mr. Garnett has his brief from a lady, I have no complaint to make against him. This lady is said to be adept in the occult sciences and, by aid of mesmerism, she professes to have had direct communication with the spirit of the unfortunate poet. . . .'

On March 11th [1829], you write from Florence:

'... My principal object in writing to you now is to tell you that I am actually writing my own life. Brown and Landor are spurring me on, and are to review it sheet by sheet, as it is written; moreover, I am commencing as a tribute of my great love for the memory of Shelley his life and moral character. Landor and Brown are in this to have a hand, therefore I am collecting every information regarding him. I always wished you to do this, Mary: if you will not, as of the living I love him and you best, incompetent as I am, I must do my best to show him to the world as I found him. Do you approve of this? Will you aid in it? without which it cannot be done. Will you give documents? Will you write anecdotes? or—be explicit on this, dear—give me your opinion; if you in the least dislike it, say so, and there is an end of it; if on the contrary, set about doing it without loss of time. Both this and my life will be sent you to peruse and approve or alter before publication, and I need not say that you will have free scope to expunge all you disapprove of....'

Mrs. Shelley I believe was in the habit of telling the truth. I merely make this observation by way of introduction to my statement of the fact that she informed me that her picture which you retain came into your possession merely for the purpose of safe keeping, whilst her movements were so uncertain. She applied to you for it in the year 40 or 50^a that she might give it to me, the answer was that it was inconvenient for you to obtain it from Florence at that time. Naturally we should like to have it here, and why you should be so disinclined to restore it (since your opinion of her is so altered) I cannot conceive.

Believe me, we have no unkindly feeling towards you, but we think that you have, with the rest of the world, made some mistakes occasionally and I much regret, and so does my husband, that you have never been able to accept our invitation to visit us and form some judgement for yourself as to our ways and surroundings.

At Boscombe there is a room built expressly to receive all that we hold most sacred. One side is occupied by a niche in which is placed the life-sized model of the monument raised to the memory of Shelley and Mary by their son—

You write from Brighton in Sept. 1835 to Mary:

'... Let it be agreed between you and me that whichever *first* has

(a) See letter to Augusta, Feb. 24th, 1850, p. 251.

five hundred pounds at his disposal shall dedicate it to the placing a fitting monument over the ashes of Shelley.

We will go to Rome together. The time, too, cannot be far distant, considering all things. . . .’

You will be glad to know that what you suggested above was carried out by Shelley and Mary’s son, the moment he had the means of doing it.

This same room is never entered but by kindred feet, or by those in whose hearts Shelley lives—amongst other things in it, there is a glass case containing locks of hair—They belong to those, he and Mary valued as friends and with whom they had been most closely associated; Leigh Hunt—Byron—Edward Williams and one marked ‘Trelawny 1822’, it is black as jet and was given no doubt at the time when Mary possessed in the giver a true and generous friend. But the Trelawny of those days, where is he? Alas! that the snows of age should not only have fallen on his head but should have frozen the heart that beat so warmly in 1822—

There is a picture too—the only one allowed to hang in the same room with those so sacred to us—again, ‘Edward Trelawny’! Hitherto these objects have been cherished under the roof of Shelley and Mary’s son, but the time has come when we must ask you whether they have any right to retain their place. At *your bidding* they shall be removed and therefore, I beg that you will answer as to this matter.

When the pages in your last book traducing Mary Shelley were pointed out to Percy and myself, we at once exclaimed, ‘Trelawny never wrote this’, because we felt that it was impossible that you who had written the letters in our possession could so shamelessly traduce the Mary Shelley you ‘loved best’ and who had been for more than a quarter of a century sleeping in her grave.

Your first book came out eight years after her death; in that she was described as quite a different person, in fact, the Mary whose opinion and approval you asked for before touching upon the life of Shelley.

It would be painful to us to think that the years which have since passed over your head, have brought about so great a change in you.

I am—truly yours,
J. SHELLEY.

EXTRACTS FROM SERIES OF TWENTY-ONE LETTERS FROM
T. J. HOGG TO LADY SHELLEY CONCERNING HIS *LIFE*
*OF SHELLEY*¹

Temple, Monday 20th April 1857.

My Dear Lady,

Thanks for the last contributions! They have been added to the Store. I shall be glad to have the Letters &c. in due time. . . .

The Shelley Papers, it appears were written at the express desire of the Madre,^a who introduced me to Bulwer^b for the purpose—and they were discontinued to make room for some contributions of Lady Blessingtons. In five and twenty years I had forgotten this.—B. omitted many things and altered the Papers, as being *too favourable*. Possibly I may insert our correspondence on the subject—most certainly I shall restore these articles to their original state, at least as far as I can. I do not wish, or intend, in my own person, to say anything unpleasant of Sir Timothy; but documents speak for themselves and will prevent me from painting him, as an amiable and benevolent Philosopher, like his Son. To falsify documents would be to injure the faith of history and to destroy the credit of our book. . . .

I am glad that you approve of my proposal to discourse of the poor Madre also; in truth, S and M,^c were so blended in their lives that I do not well see how their biographies can be separated. . . .

14th. May 1857.

. . . On returning home to dinner the day before yesterday, I was surprised, rather surprised than pleased, to find that the Portrait^d had disappeared again from the wall; on inquiring I was informed that it had been sent to an engraver, by Mr. Trelawny's desire, to embellish his forthcoming work. If I had known this, I would have prevented it by an excuse, but where matters are conducted in an underhand way, we are powerless. A Brigand's view of the Poetic character and Temperament is surely a monster of modern times; our forefathers had not Jack Shepherd's *Life of Milton*, or Dick

¹ Unpublished. Boscombe MSS. A.

(a) Mary Shelley. (b) Bulwer Lytton, editor of the *New Monthly*, in which the papers appeared. (c) Shelley and Mary. (d) Of Shelley.

Turpin's *British Poets*. Mr. Knox, I am told, has seen a portion of this elegant work; he esteems it highly, with a few flowers from his own pen, it will be perfect. When I was in the country last autumn Mr. K. thought proper to honour my family by calling upon them. I must say I thought this a great liberty; and he has repeated his visits, I have been informed. It is not fair to abuse the hospitality of Ladies—and for my part I do not like these Eavesdropping *Med-wins*; one is never *safe* with them.

I help you fairly, fat and lean; I tell you the *whole Truth*, dear Wrennie,^a and I am sorry if there is anything unpleasant in the latter part of this letter. But come what may, fair or foul, one thing at least is quite certain, I will not relax my efforts to accomplish our labour of Love.

I am ever, Dear Lady, faithfully and respectfully Yours,

T. JEFF'N. HOGG.

... Temple. The Morrow of St. Swithun, who rained not, 1857.

... What do you read yourself, you have not told me? I began *Perkin Warbeck*,^b but ... indeed, I do not care about the 'Roses', altho' I have looked all my life upon that famous garden, where they grew and were gathered. I go on slowly, O so slowly! with *The Last Days of Pompeii*; say you have read it through to encourage me. Liberal or Conservative; chosen or rejected—Knight, Baronet or Esquire; Lytton Bulwer, or Bulwer Lytton; it is always the same thing; self-conceit the most insufferable!

With kind regards, I am Ever, Dear Lady,

Your faithful,

DAH.^c

Temple. 30 July 1857.

Dearest Wrennie. ... If I succeed in making *Our Book* as good as I desire, you will say that I am 'such a love!' But I shall regret, if I am obliged to finish the First Part without having once seen those calm and severe virgins, the Sisters of the Divine Poet; to whom, as to two of the Muses, I ought to look for inspiration.

(a) Family 'nick-name' for Lady Shelley. (b) Novel by Mary Shelley.

(c) Hogg also uses this nickname in letters to Jane quoted in *After Shelley*.

Thursday, September 10th. 1857.

Dearest Lady. . . . I have now arrived at a delicate and difficult part of my task, but which is also a most interesting period; if I treat it successfully, as I hope I may, I shall be truly gratified. We are quite agreed, that *Our Book must be amusing*. I shall *name* as few persons as possible, scarcely anybody indeed, except the members of his own family, in the *first* edition; if it shall appear, that people are content with the manner in which they have been treated, it will be easy to supply the names in a subsequent edition.

I am ever, Dearest Wrennie,
Your faithful

DAH.

(Several letters omitted)

33 Clifton Road. December 12th 1857.

Dearest Lady. They are two charming persons, that is quite certain; worthy in every respect to be the sisters of my incomparable friend! I am so happy to have seen them, and I greatly desire to see them again; to have a good spell of their society. They spoke of You with great esteem and regard, and this alone was enough to produce a favourable impression.

They came rather before twelve, and we were sitting talking so nicely; we agreed exactly in everything and they told me many things, but most unfortunately at half past twelve, that rascal, Hookham came; I had him shown into another room, but supposing I was particularly wanted, the ladies were too polite, notwithstanding my assurance to the contrary, to remain more than a quarter of an hour longer; and so the little Imp cut six pages at least out of my book! There is something weird about them; and there ought to be. So tall, so thin, so straight; such little round heads, such little faces, small features, and large wild, starting eyes like Bysshe; at once young and old, but rather young than old! They are fit sisters for a poet and a necromancer. The miniature is like and unlike; to common apprehensions it is like, but it does not make them look sufficiently like Enchantresses; they do not look in the portrait, as if they were able to turn you into a milk-white kid and Percy into a statue of black marble, which no doubt, they could do easily if they pleased.

Xmas Eve 1857.

Dear Wrennie. It is *all right!* I have just had Moxon [the publisher]. He is in a very good temper of mind; full of zeal and good hopes. He has been ill and indeed looks ill and his brother, a partner and manager of his concern, is laid up with an abscess. He made and desires to be made, every apology for his inevitable delay and apparent inattention. He put the portraits etc. this day into the Engravers hands, not being able to go to him before.

He will send for the MS. on the first of January and begin to print it immediately; we may rely upon it, all will be ready for the season. He said nothing about T's [Trelawny's] book and as the subject is not a pleasing one, I did not mention it. Let us hope that it will only serve to stimulate curiosity; and let us confidently trust that the noontide splendour of *OUR* glorious luminary, will at once quench and render for ever invisible that faint, feeble twinkling star! If he keeps up to the mark, which he now indicates, *all* as I said, is *right*.

So a merry Xmas,

Ever your faithful

DAH.

(Feb. 14th and 19th to Sir Percy and Feb. 23rd to Lady Shelley omitted)

The Ides of March, Clifton Road.

Dearest Lady.

I will send *Middleton*^a by the Post to-day or to-morrow. On Saturday I received a very kind invitation from the fair Hellen to spend Easter week at Elcott. It would give me great pleasure to accept and the change of air and scene, I am sure, would refresh me and do me good. But it being doubtful, whether the Printing will be *quite* finished by that time, I have just written to request permission to postpone my visit for a short time.

In the course of the week, I shall send my *Preface* to Mr. Moxon, I will transcribe what you have written about the *Portrait*, and your wishes will receive, no doubt, due attention. Shall we see the Solar eclipse this morning? At present the Sun shines and promises well.

Ever, Dear Wrennie,

Your faithful,

DAH.

(a) Charles S. Middleton's book, *Shelley and his Writings* (1858).

SIR PERCY SHELLEY TO HOGG

My dear Mr. Hogg,

May 13th. 1858.

Before we finish the arrangement of the documents and materials which it may be advisable to publish, I should like our position with regard to one another to be more defined than it was previously to the commencement of the biography—more defined even, than it has been since our last conversation on the subject.

You must now be well aware that my feelings as well as those of my father's sisters have been much hurt by the indiscreet use which we consider you to have made of the material with which we provided you.

The course of events which you are now entering on in my father's biography naturally makes me anxious as to the tone and spirit with which you will treat them.

For the sake, then, of avoiding, as far as may be, all possible future misunderstandings between you and me, and as a duty which I seem to myself to owe to the memory of my mother, I shall consider, indeed, I request it as a favour of you, to give me a plain and decided answer to this question—

Will you submit the proofs of your future volumes to my inspection with the clear understanding that I am to have the right to erase (before publication) any passage which in my opinion may tend to throw discredit and ridicule on the memories of my father and mother.

As the same feelings ought to animate us both—our only objects being to give due honour and credit to my father and your early friend—you will fully appreciate the motives which have caused this letter.

Believe me,

My dear Mr. Hogg,

Yours sincerely,

PERCY SHELLEY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON TO LADY SHELLEY¹

Apia Samoa.

Jan. 15th, 1890.

My dear Lady Shelley,

I have known now for some days the loss that has befallen you; the news came to me in a letter from California in a simple news-

¹ From Boscombe MSS. A. Printed by permission of Mr. Lloyd Osbourne.

paper cutting without detail or even date; the more I think of it, the less I can imagine the greatness of your bereavement. He was so kind, so bright, so natural, had as much of all that is most beautiful and pleasant in youth, he endeared himself so swiftly even to strangers, he was so full of innocent interests, so full of strange, interesting, simple thoughts; I cannot think how you are to endure the loss of that companion. Late as we knew him, it seems like a great hole made, and bursts another link with England, that we shall see him no more, hear him no more, enjoy no more that quaint wit of his, his ready laughter, his delight in all romance, and the delightful sweetness of his nature. I pray God support you in this loss; none could be heavier; you can have but the single consolation that he died young—or so at least he was when we last saw him and if there was any change, it can have been but through sickness. I feel that I make my wife old; depend upon it, if a husband is still young in all good senses, his wife has been a blessing; and when our dear ones go there is no consolation possible, but that we have not altogether failed in our part, and it was good for us to have been there with them. No one could ever think of him as old; he had the morning dew upon his spirit; a boy and a poet—so a poet's son—until the last. What he was when he was young in years also, we do not know; what we saw of him, so near the end, is beautiful to recall. Do you remember coming once to call on us, you two together, on a day of a high wind? and how, as you drove, he made a romance that you were driving through a forest, and would come presently to an old ruined abbey like one of Mrs. Radcliffe's and go in through courts and corridors and cloisters, till you came at last to a huge stone hall partly unroofed, and there in the chimney find a great bonfire blazing in the wind—and no one near? What a deal of his father there was in that! and how much of the best of his grandfather! and how much of the perennial boy! You must have many of the like to remember; alas, that pleasant fancy will no longer delight you. But you have a sure hope that separation will not be for long, as not for ever.

I write for myself and for my wife, who is down with a little fever. We can but say the one thing; we pray God support you. Accept our love and sympathy.

Your affectionate

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON TO LADY SHELLEY¹

S.S. Lubeck

between Sydney and Samoa.

[1892]

My dear Lady Shelley

I have long been wishing to write you a decent letter, and like the most of such wishes, in my case at least—it will very likely never be fulfilled. I can't think of anything that would have given me greater pleasure than the revolvers from the *Oceana*.^a Lloyd has had them all marked with my name *and the name of the donors*; they shall stand in my house I hope forever, and as long as any of us continue to go in and out, they will call to mind far away places and loved faces. I was glad too to get your letter, and to see how faithfully and wisely you have borne your loss. These survivals are not, after all, for so long. You ask me to visit you, dear lady, it is still a race between us for the goal; but if I prove the laggard and do by any chance ever return to England, the visit shall be paid. It is more likely I shall lie, as I shall live, in Upolu, farther from the inviolate island than even Shelley; the farthest, I suppose, of all that ever blackened paper with printed English words.—I would like exceedingly to visit you to-day at Boscombe, come into the long drawing room, go up the stairs in the conservatory and sit awhile to speak with you in the shrine; but I would not stop for lunch; for then I should see the empty place to which I have not yet become the least accustomed—and when lunch was over, how could I go into the green room alone? No, it is perhaps better to stay where I am, and look at my pistols where both names are engraved, and think of you, as I have known you, undivided.

I am so glad Sir Percy saw the Master;^b I little thought what a strange second sense, BRD would come to bear; well, we all fly it, and the night is at hand. I have just had an acute attack in Sydney and got off with some difficulty for my more congenial island, there I trust to be all right again—for a while. Our place promises to be most beautiful, six hundred feet above the sea, part on the slope of a steep mountain, part on a kind of table land cut through by the deep beds of streams. All is in forest. We can see the ships entering and leaving the port of Apia at our feet; if they lie far out and have

¹ From Boscombe MSS. A. Printed by permission of Mr. Lloyd Osbourne.

(a) A yacht of Sir Percy's.

(b) *The Master of Ballantrae*, dedicated to Sir Percy Florence and Lady Shelley.

tall spars, we can even see them rolling at anchor in the roads; some fifty miles of blue Pacific lies outspread in front of us; and on the left the view is inclosed by some green mountains six or eight miles to the eastward. When I left, my wife and I had been for months toiling very hard and living very meagrely in a sort of shanty; a very resonant place in rains, and a very draughty one in wind, of both of which we had plenty. (I should say the ship is rolling very hard, which must explain my handwriting; I dare not set the inkpot on the table—and my pen describes some singular evolutions in which I have no share; the letter was begun some days ago when it was smooth.) I was glad to hear of the Shelley memorial.^a An idea strikes me; how would it be to put upon it for epigraph [*sic*] the splendid verse; 'The inheritors of unfulfilled renown'—I forget how the phrase finishes, but I know it is apposite and beautiful, and means something like 'arose to greet him'. I do not like to put my oar in; but I shall make an alternative suggestion from the same poem, the stanza about life and death and the glass being trampled. Either of these would be excellent; but give me 'the inheritors'.

This dreadful ink so runs [?] and sticks, I doubt if one word will be legible by the time this reaches you. I hope enough will remain to testify to the warm affection with which I sign myself

Your friend

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

(a) The memorial at University College, Oxford.

APPENDIX D

THE CHOICE (reprinted with emendations from a new MS. source).

TWO UNPUBLISHED POEMS.

A FRAGMENT, 'TO JANE'.

A DIRGE (with new note).

THE CHOICE¹

My Choice!—My Choice, alas! was had and gone
With the red gleam of last autumnal² sun;
Lost in that³ deep wherein⁴ he bathed his head,
My Choice, my life, my hope together fled:—
A wanderer here, no more I seek a home,
The sky a vault, and Italy a tomb.⁵
Yet as some days a pilgrim I remain,
Linked to my orphan child by love's strong⁶ chain;
And, since I have a faith that I must earn,
By suffering and by patience, a return
Of that companionship and love, which first
Upon my young life's cloud like sunlight burst,
And now has left me, dark, as when its beams,
Quenched in⁷ the might of dreadful ocean streams,
Leave that one cloud, a gloomy speck on high,
Beside one star in the else darkened sky;—
Since I must live, how would I pass the day,
How meet with fewest tears the morning's ray,
How sleep with calmest dreams, how find delights,
As fireflies gleam through interlunar nights?

¹ I have reproduced the poem by permission of Mr. M. Buxton Forman from the edition edited by his father Mr. H. Buxton Forman in 1876, from a version in Leigh Hunt's papers. I have found among Boscombe MSS. A an earlier version written on leaves torn out of the 1822-4 Journal on which Dr. Garnett wrote the note: 'Found among correspondence. Evidently part of the missing pages of the Journal. The letter of Mr. Forman refers to another version.' I have noted alterations from the 'Journal' version.

² summer's. ³ the. ⁴ in which. ⁵ ! ⁶ duty's. ⁷ by.

First let me call on thee! Lost as thou art,
 Thy name aye fills my sense, thy love my heart.
 Oh, gentle Spirit! thou hast often sung,
 How fallen on evil days thy heart was wrung;
 Now fierce remorse and unreplying death
 Waken a chord within my heart, whose breath,
 Thrilling and keen, in accents audible
 A tale of unrequited love doth tell.
 It was not anger,—while thy earthly dress
 Encompassed still thy soul's rare loveliness,
 All anger was atoned by many a kind
 Caress or tear, that spoke the softened mind.—
 It speaks of cold neglect, averted eyes,
 That blindly crushed thy soul's fond sacrifice:—
 My heart was all thine own,—but yet a shell
 Closed in its core, which seemed impenetrable,
 Till sharp-toothed misery tore the husk in twain,
 Which gaping lies, nor may unite again.
 Forgive me! let thy love descend in dew
 Of soft repentance and regret most true;—

In a strange guise thou dost descend, or how
 Could love soothe fell remorse,—as it does now?—
 By this remorse and love, and by the years
 Through which we shared our common hopes and fears,
 By all our best companionship, I dare
 Call on thy sacred name without a fear;—
 And thus I pray to thee, my friend, my Heart!
 That in thy new abode, thou'lt bear a part
 In soothing thy poor Mary's lonely pain,¹
 As link by link she weaves her heavy chain!—
 And thou, strange star! ascendant at my birth,
 Which rained, they said, kind influence on the earth,
 So from great parents sprung, I dared to boast
 Fortune my friend, till set, thy beams were lost!
 And thou, Inscrutable, by whose decree
 Has burst this hideous storm of misery!
 Here let me cling, here to the² solitudes,

¹ chain.² these.

These myrtle-shaded streams and chestnut woods;
Tear me not hence—here let me live and die,
In my adopted land—my country—Italy.

A happy Mother first I saw this¹ sun,
Beneath this² sky my race of joy was run.
First my sweet girl, whose face resembled *his*,
Slept on bleak Lido, near Venetian seas.
Yet still my eldest-born, my loveliest, dearest,
Clung to my side, most joyful then when nearest.
An English home had given this angel birth,
Near those royal³ towers, where the grass-clad earth
Is shadowed o'er by England's loftiest trees:
Then our companion o'er the swift-passed seas,
He dwelt beside the Alps, or gently slept,
Rocked by the waves, o'er which our vessel swept,
Beside his father, nurst upon my breast,
While Leman's waters shook⁴ with fierce unrest.
His fairest limbs had bathed in Serchio's stream;
His eyes had watched Italian lightnings gleam;
His childish voice had, with its loudest call,
The echoes waked of Este's castle wall;
Had paced Pompeii's Roman market-place;
Had gazed with infant wonder on the grace
Of stone-wrought deities, and pictured saints,
In Rome's high palaces—there were no taints
Of ruin on his cheek—all shadowless
Grim death approached—the boy met his caress,
And while his glowing limbs with life's warmth shone,
Around those limbs his icy arms were thrown.

His spoils were strewed beneath the soil⁵ of Rome,
Whose flowers now star the dark earth near his tomb:
Its airs and plants received the mortal part,
His spirit beats within his mother's heart.

¹ its. ² her. ³ Originally 'ancient', but altered by Hunt to 'old', and finally by Mrs. Shelley to 'royal'. H. B. F. ⁴ Crossed out, and 'tost' substituted. ⁵ The words 'soil', 'earth', and 'land' are written in and cancelled in such a way as to leave a doubt which was finally adopted: 'land' is in Hunt's writing. H. B. F.

Infant immortal! chosen for the sky!
 No grief upon thy brow's young purity
 Entrenched sad lines, or blotted with its might
 The sunshine of thy smile's celestial light;—
 The image shattered, the bright spirit fled,
 Thou shin'st the evening star among the dead.
 And thou, his playmate, whose deep lucid eyes,
 Were a reflection of these bluest skies;
 Child of our hearts, divided in ill hour,
 We could not watch the bud's expanding flower,
 Now thou art gone, one guileless victim more,
 To the black death that rules this sunny shore.

Companion of my griefs! thy sinking frame
 Had often drooped, and then erect again
 With shows of health had mocked forebodings dark;—
 Watching the changes of that quivering spark,
 I feared and hoped, and dared to trust at length,
 Thy very weakness was my tower of strength.
 Methought thou wert a spirit from the sky,
 Which struggled with its chains, but¹ could not die,
 And that destruction had no power to win
 From out those limbs the soul that burnt within
 Tell me, ye ancient walls, and weed-grown towers,
 Ye Roman airs and brightly painted flowers,
 Does not his spirit visit that recess
 Which built of² love enshrines his earthly dress;—
 No more! no more!—what though that form be fled,
 My trembling hand shall never write thee—dead—
 Thou liv'st in Nature, Love, my Memory,³
 With deathless faith for aye adoring thee,
 The wife of Time⁴ no more, I wed Eternity.

'Tis thus the Past—on which my spirit leans,
 Makes dearest to my soul Italian scenes.
 In Tuscan fields the winds in odours steeped
 From flowers and cypresses, when skies have wept,
 Shall, like the notes of music once most dear,
 Which brings the unstrung voice upon my ear

¹ yet.² by.³ Not capitals.⁴ Not capitals.

Of one beloved, to memory display
 Past scenes, past hopes, past joys, in long array.
¹Pugnano's trees, beneath whose shade¹ he stood,
 The pools reflecting Pisa's old pine wood,
 The fireflies' beams, the aziola's cry
 All breathe his spirit which can² never die.
 Such memories have linked these hills and caves,
 These woodland paths, and streams, and knelling waves
 Past to each sad pulsation of my breast
 And made their melancholy arms the haven of my rest.

Here will I live, within a little dell,
 Which but a month ago³ I saw full well:—
 A dream then pictured forth the solitude
 Deep in the shelter of a lovely wood;
 A voice then whispered a strange prophecy,
 My dearest, widowed friend, that thou and I
 Should there together pass the weary⁴ day,
 As we before have done in Spezia's bay,⁵
 As through long hours we watched the sails that neared
 O'er the far sea, their vessel ne'er appeared;
 One pang of agony, one dying gleam
 Of hope led us along, beside the ocean stream,
 But keen-eyed fear, the while all hope departs,
 Stabbed with a million stings our heart of hearts.
 The sad revolving year has not allayed
 The poison of these bleeding wounds, or made
 The anguish less of that corroding thought
 Which has with grief each single moment fraught,
 Edward, thy voice was hushed⁶—thy noble heart
 With aspiration heaves no more—a part
 Of heaven-resumèd past thou art become,
 Thy spirit waits with his in our far home.

¹ The Serchio's stream upon whose banks. ² shall.

³ This would seem to indicate that the poem was composed within two or three weeks of Shelley's death—in which case 'sad revolving year', in line 152, must be taken merely as referring to the lapse of time, not the lapse of a year. H. B. F. ⁴ livelong. ⁵ First version ends here.

⁶ Leigh Hunt suggests as an emendation 'thou too! thou too!' for 'thy voice was hushed'. H. B. F.

POEM

'Ah! he is gone—and I alone;
 How dark and dreary seems the time!
 'Tis thus when the glad sun is flown,
 Night rushes o'er the Indian clime.

Is there no star to cheer this night—
 No soothing twilight for the breast?
 Yes—Memory sheds her fairy light,
 Beaming at sunset's golden west.

And hope of dawn—Oh brighter far
 Than clouds that in the Orient burn,
 More welcome than the morning star,
 Is the dear thought—he will return!

ON READING WORDSWORTH'S LINES ON PEEL CASTLE²

It is with me, as erst with you
 O Poet, Nature's Chronicler,
 The summer seas have lost their hue
 And storm sits brooding everywhere.

The gentlest rustling of the deep
^aAye sings the dirge of him I lost,
^bAnd when the furious billows leap
^cMighty ships in wreck are tost.

A voice I hear upon the wind—
 Which bids me haste to join him there,
 And woo the tempest's ^dhorrors kind
 Which gives to me a kindred bier.

¹ The original manuscript of this poem is inserted at the beginning of the Ashley Library copy of 'The Choice', edited by H. Buxton Forman. (*A Shelley Library*, p. 22.)

² This poem is written on p. 107 torn out of the Journal and immediately following 'The Choice'. Unpublished. Boscombe MSS. A.

The following corrections are made on the text, the original words and lines being crossed through:

(a) To beat. (b) And when waves raise their furrows steep. (c) And briny foam in whirl is tost. (d) breath unkind.

And when all smooth are oceans plains
 And sails afar are glistening,
 The fairest skiff his form contains
 To my poor heart's mad picturing.

Then wildly to the beach I rush,
 And fain would seize the frailest boat
 And from dull earth the *pinnacle push
 On dancing waves towards him to float.

'Nor may I e'er again behold
 The sea, and be as I have been
 My bitter grief will ne'er grow old—'
 Nor say I this with mind serene.

For oft I weep in solitude
 And shed so many bitter tears,
 While on past joys I vainly brood
 And shrink in fear from coming years.

Kentish Town.

December 8th 1825.

FRAGMENT

¹'To Jane with the Last' (the word 'Man' remains on the stub of the Journal).

Tribute for thee, dear solace of my life
 Reject not thou thy Mary's offering,
 A tale of woe, with many sorrows rife,
 Tribute unmeet [?] with cypress bound, I bring
 It is the echo, sweet

(a) slight hulk, bark.

² On a leaf torn out of the Journal and numbered 'Page 109'.

A DIRGE¹

This morn thy gallant bark
 Sailed on a sunny sea:
 'Tis noon, and tempests dark
 Have wrecked it on the lee.
 Ah woe! ah woe!
 By Spirits of the deep
 Thou'rt cradled on the billow
 To thy eternal sleep.

Thou sleep'st upon the shore
 Beside the knelling surge
 And Sea-nymphs evermore
 Shall sadly chant thy dirge.
 They come, they come,
 The Spirits of the deep,—
 While near thy seaweed pillow
 My lonely watch I keep.

From far across the sea
 I hear a loud lament,
 By Echo's voice for thee
 From Ocean's caverns sent.
 O list! O list!
 The Spirits of the deep!
 They raise a wail of sorrow,
 While I forever weep.

¹ This poem was printed at the beginning of Mary Shelley's 'Notes to the Poems of 1822' in the 1839 edition of the Poems which she edited. An earlier version had appeared in *The Keepsake*, 1831. In a letter to Mrs. Gisborne, where she quotes the verses, Mary says: 'PS. Do you not guess why neither these nor those I sent you could please those you mention? Papa loves not the memory of Shelley, because he feels that he injured him—and Jane—do you not understand enough of her to be convinced of the thoughts that make it distasteful to her that I should feel and above all, be thought by others to feel, and to have a right to feel? Oh, the human heart is a strange puzzle.' June 11th, 1835. Bodleian Add. MSS. D. 5.

APPENDIX E
PROSE WORKS

FRANKENSTEIN

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FRANKENSTEIN: PUBLICATION

Frankenstein was first offered to Murray in May 1817, but refused by him. Mary wrote in her letter to Shelley from Skinner Street, May 29th, 'Of course, Gifford¹ did not allow this courtly bookseller to purchase *Frankenstein*.'

Shelley then offered it to the Olliers on August 3rd, but they also refused it, evidently before August 22nd, as on that date Shelley wrote the following letter to Lackington, Allen and Co.²

Great Marlow, Bucks.

August 22nd, 1817.

Gentlemen,

I ought to have mentioned that the novel which I sent you is not my own production, but that of a friend, who, not being at present in England cannot make the correction you suggest. As to any mere inaccuracies of language, I should feel myself authorized to amend them when revising proofs. With respect to the terms of publication, my first wish certainly was to receive on my friend's behalf an adequate price for the copyright of the MS. As it is, however, I beg to submit the following proposal which I hope you will think fair, particularly as I understand it is an arrangement frequently made by Booksellers with Authors who are new to the world—It is that you should take the risk of printing, advertising, etc., entirely on yourselves and, after full deduction being made from the profits of the work to cover these expenses that the clear produce, both of the first edition and of every succeeding edition should be divided between you and the author. I cannot in the author's part disclaim all interest in the first edition, because it is possible that there may be no demand for another, and then the profits, however small, will be all that will accrue.

I hope on consideration that you will not think such an arrangement as this unreasonable, or one to which you will refuse your assent.

Gentlemen, I am

Your very obedient servant,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

¹ Gifford was editor of the *Quarterly Review*. The 'courtly bookseller' is Murray.

² His letter is so headed, but the first edition bears the names Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mayor, and Jones.

It was published by Lackingtons in March 1818 with the following title-page:

FRANKENSTEIN;
or,
THE MODERN PROMETHEUS.

In Three volumes.

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?—
Paradise Lost.

London:

Printed for Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mayor, & Jones,
Finsbury Square. 1818.

PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION

THE short Preface to the first edition, reprinted in later editions, was written by Shelley. In 1831 Mary added a much longer Introduction in which she told the origin of the story.

¹The Publishers of the Standard Novels, in selecting 'Frankenstein' for one of their series, expressed a wish that I should furnish them with some account of the origin of the story. I am the more willing to comply, because I shall thus give a general answer to the question, so very frequently asked me—'How I, then a young girl, came to think of, and to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea?' It is true that I am very averse to bringing myself forward in print; but as my account will only appear as an appendage to a former production, and as it will be confined to such topics as have connection with my authorship alone, I can scarcely accuse myself of a personal intrusion.

²In the summer of 1816, we visited Switzerland, and became the neighbours of Lord Byron. At first we spent our pleasant hours on the lake, or wandering on its shores; and Lord Byron, who was writing the third canto of *Childe Harold*, was the only one among us who put his thoughts upon paper. These, as he brought them successively to us, clothed in all the light and harmony of poetry, seemed to stamp as divine the glories of heaven and earth, whose influences we partook with him.

¹ Standard Novels series, Messrs. Colburn and Bentley.

² The paragraphs are omitted here which describe her life in Dundee (quoted on p. 19), also a paragraph on her early married life. There are no other omissions.

But it proved a wet, ungenial summer, and incessant rain often confined us for days to the house. Some volumes of ghost stories, translated from the German into French, fell into our hands. There was the History of the Inconstant Lover, who, when he thought to clasp the bride to whom he had pledged his vows, found himself in the arms of the pale ghost of her whom he had deserted. There was the tale of the sinful founder of his race, whose miserable doom it was to bestow the kiss of death on all the younger sons of his fated house, just when they reached the age of promise. His gigantic, shadowy form, clothed like the ghost in Hamlet, in complete armour, but with the beaver up, was seen at midnight, by the moon's fitful beams, to advance slowly along the gloomy avenue. The shape was lost beneath the shadow of the castle walls; but soon a gate swung back, a step was heard, the door of the chamber opened, and he advanced to the couch of the blooming youths, cradled in healthy sleep. Eternal sorrow sat upon his face as he bent down and kissed the forehead of the boys, who from that hour withered like flowers snapt upon the stalk. I have not seen these stories since then; but their incidents are as fresh in my mind as if I had read them yesterday.

'We will each write a ghost story,' said Lord Byron; and his proposition was acceded to. There were four of us. The noble author began a tale, a fragment of which he printed at the end of his poem of Mazeppa. Shelley, more apt to embody ideas and sentiments in the radiance of brilliant imagery, and in the music of the most melodious verse that adorns our language, than to invent the machinery of a story, commenced one founded on the experiences of his early life. Poor Polidori had some terrible idea about a skull-headed lady, who was so punished for peeping through a keyhole—what to see I forget—something very shocking and wrong of course; but when she was reduced to a worse condition than the renowned Tom of Coventry, he did not know what to do with her, and was obliged to despatch her to the tomb of the Capulets, the only place for which she was fitted. The illustrious poets also, annoyed by the platitude of prose, speedily relinquished their uncongenial task.

I busied myself *to think of a story*,—a story to rival those which had excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror—one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart. If I did not accomplish these things, my ghost story would be unworthy of its name. I thought and pondered—vainly. I felt that blank incapability of invention which is the greatest misery of authorship, when dull Nothing replies to our anxious invocations. *Have you thought of a story?* I was asked each morning, and each morning I was forced to reply with a mortifying negative.

Every thing must have a beginning, to speak in Sanchean phrase; and that beginning must be linked to something that went before. The Hindoos give the world an elephant to support it, but they make the elephant stand upon a tortoise. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself. In all matters of discovery and invention, even of those that appertain to the imagination, we are continually reminded of the story of Columbus and his egg. Invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a subject, and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it.

Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley, to which I was a devout but nearly silent listener. During one of these, various philosophical doctrines were discussed, and among others the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated. They talked of the experiments of Dr. Darwin, (I speak not of what the Doctor really did, or said that he did, but, as more to my purpose, of what was then spoken of as having been done by him,) who preserved a piece of vermicelli in a glass case, till by some extraordinary means it began to move with voluntary motion. Not thus, after all, would life be given. Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth.

Night waned upon this talk, and even the witching hour had gone by, before we retired to rest. When I placed my head on my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie. I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision,—I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handywork, horror-stricken. He would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect animation, would subside into dead matter; and he might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench for ever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which he had

looked upon as the cradle of life. He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.

I opened mine in terror. The idea so possessed my mind, that a thrill of fear ran through me, and I wished to exchange the ghastly image of my fancy for the realities around. I see them still; the very room, the dark *parquet*, the closed shutters, with the moonlight struggling through, and the sense I had that the glassy lake and white high Alps were beyond. I could not so easily get rid of my hideous phantom; still it haunted me. I must try to think of something else. I recurred to my ghost story,—my tiresome unlucky ghost story! O! if I could only contrive one which would frighten my reader as I myself had been frightened that night!

Swift as light and as cheering was the idea that broke in upon me. 'I have found it! What terrified me will terrify others; and I need only describe the spectre which had haunted my midnight pillow.' On the morrow I announced that I had *thought of a story*. I began that day with the words, *It was on a dreary night of November*, making only a transcript of the grim terrors of my waking dream.

At first I thought but of a few pages—of a short tale; but Shelley urged me to develop the idea at greater length. I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband, and yet but for his incitement, it would never have taken the form in which it was presented to the world. From this declaration I must except the preface. As far as I can recollect, it was entirely written by him.

And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have an affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words, which found no true echo in my heart. Its several pages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation, when I was not alone; and my companion was one who, in this world, I shall never see more. But this is for myself; my readers have nothing to do with these associations.

I will add but one word as to the alterations I have made. They are principally those of style. I have changed no portion of the story, nor introduced any new ideas or circumstances. I have mended the language where it was so bald as to interfere with the interest of the narrative; and these changes occur almost exclusively in the beginning of the first volume. Throughout they are entirely confined to such parts as are mere adjuncts to the story, leaving the core and substance of it untouched.

M. W. S.

London, October 15, 1831.

THE STORY¹

THE passage to which Mary refers in her Introduction, beginning 'It was on a dreary night of November', does not occur until the fifth chapter, for the story of Frankenstein proper is developed within the framework of a series of letters from the Arctic by Robert Walton to his sister, Margaret Saville. Walton, a young man of frustrated poetic ambitions, inherits money which enables him to undertake an expedition to the North Pole. One night, when the ship is becalmed amid ice-floes, he sees a 'low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on toward the north, at the distance of half a mile; a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge, and guided the dogs. We watched the rapid progress of the traveller with our telescopes, until he was lost among the distant inequalities of the ice.' The next morning a similar sledge is sighted by the sailors on which there is a man, exhausted and in danger of death from the dissolving ice around, but who, on the sailors endeavouring to haul him into their ship, first asks, 'Before I come on board your vessel, will you have the kindness to inform me whither you are bound?' On hearing that the ship is bound for the North Pole, he is satisfied and comes aboard.

The stranger tells his story to Walton; his name is Frankenstein and he is of noble Genevese parentage. His parents had two other sons and an adopted daughter, the beautiful Elizabeth, a nobleman's child whom they rescued from poverty-stricken foster-parents and to whom Frankenstein was betrothed from an early age.

At his country home at Belrive, Frankenstein found a great friend in Henry Clerval^a and developed an early interest in natural science through reading Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Albertus Magnus. When he went to the university at Ingoldstadt these authors were discarded for more up-to-date works, but his first enthusiasm for their teaching did not diminish. Forgetful of all else, he applied himself to the search for the elixir of life, and suddenly his

¹ I have quoted from the 1831 edition, an improvement on that of 1818.

(a) p. 24: 'It was my temper to avoid a crowd, and to attach myself fervently to a few. I was indifferent, therefore, to my schoolfellows in general; but I united myself in the bonds of the closest friendship to one among them.' (Added in 1831.) Compare with this Mary's own search for friends.

labour was rewarded. He had the elixir, it remained to animate the body he had constructed in human form.

It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips. . . .

Horried at his creature, Frankenstein fled from it. After a restless night, he wandered out into the streets in the morning hoping to distract his mind, when suddenly he found himself before the inn where the Swiss *diligences* put down their passengers, and who should alight from a coach but Clerval! Frankenstein could not confide his haunting terror to his friend, but under his genial influence he was beginning to be restored to his natural self when he received a letter from his father telling him that his little brother William had been found murdered. He hurried home and on the way there caught sight of his monster lurking in a wood; in a flash he realized that his brother's murderer was not the suspected maid-servant but the monster he had himself created. But, certain that the judge would never believe his story, he is powerless to save the innocent Justine from the death to which she is sentenced.

From Belrive, Frankenstein undertook a journey alone to the valley of Chamonix.¹ On the *mer de glace* he meets the monster. His first impulse is to strike him dead, but he is restrained by the mon-

¹ This is an autobiographical description of the expedition with Shelley and Claire in 1816. There is a digression while the story of Félix and Safie is told.

ster's argument, 'All men hate the wretched.' Frankenstein as his creator has a responsibility which he cannot evade, and the monster promises to leave him in peace if he will make another creature for his wife.

He then describes to Frankenstein his gradual awakening to sentience and how he learnt to speak by watching a cottage family who lived near the den which he inhabited. It is the rebuff he received from these people whom he had learnt to love and from whom he only desired sympathy which dealt him his first blow of disillusionment and bitterness. He had succeeded in getting a hearing from the blind old father, but when the family came in, Félix, the son, forcibly removed him from the old man's knee, and the two girls, Agatha and the Turkish Safie, ran away in horror.

He did not yield to his first temptation to destroy them all, but, still anxious to secure human goodwill, one day rescued a little girl from drowning. Her father fired at him and wounded him in the shoulder. 'This was then the reward of my benevolence!' Embittered, but still with no evil intent, he wandered the woods near Geneva and one day met with a beautiful little boy. Intending only to fondle him, he was distracted when the child struggled in his arms and showed his loathing.

'Hideous monster! let me go. My papa is a Syndic—he is M. Frankenstein—he will punish you. You dare not keep me.'

'Frankenstein! You belong then to my enemy—to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim.'

The child still struggled, and loaded me with epithets which carried despair to my heart; I grasped his throat to silence him, and in a moment he lay dead at my feet.

In spite of his horror, there was something in the monster's story that touched Frankenstein, and he promised to make him a wife. The work was loathsome, and he sought every occasion for delay, but at last after a tour through England and as far north as Perth with Clerval he went on alone to one of the remotest of the Orkneys. Here he succeeded in forming another monster and was about to bring it to life when he was overcome with apprehension; supposing the monster's promise to leave Europe and never to molest human kind again did not apply to his wife—might they not produce between them a race of monsters who would destroy the earth? The risk was too great; Frankenstein

destroyed the creature. At that moment he saw the monster looking in at the window at him, savage with disappointment and rage. 'I will be with you on your wedding night,' was his curse.

He disappeared before Frankenstein could catch him, and there was nothing for the disconsolate creator to do but to return home. Caught in a squall, he was blown on to a strange shore, where he was greeted by a hostile crowd who accused him of murder. Denying his guilt, he was taken to see the murdered man, and to his horror found that it was Henry Clerval. For weeks he lay in prison in a state of delirium, until the magistrate of the district came to him and told him his father had travelled from Geneva to be with him and that he would have no difficulty in establishing his alibi. Returned to Geneva, Frankenstein's constant postponements of his wedding-day disquieted his father and made Elizabeth offer to release him if he loved another. This decided him to take the risk of death, and with every precaution in the way of arms he went with his bride to the Lake of Como. Here, in the evening, while he patrolled the terrace of their villa looking for the monster, he heard a scream, and rushed in to Elizabeth's room to find her murdered. Over her body he swore that henceforward he would devote himself to the pursuit and destruction of the monster. It was on this quest that he had reached the Arctic.

At this point Walton takes up the story again in another letter, in which he tells his sister that he is returning home without attaining his goal, as he cannot ask his sailors to face the risks of progressing farther north. Frankenstein had tried to rally them, but Walton himself had decided it was too much to ask; and now Frankenstein had died.

Margaret, what comment can I make on the untimely extinction of this glorious spirit? What can I say, that will enable you to understand the depth of my sorrow? All that I should express would be inadequate and feeble. My tears flow; my mind is overshadowed by a cloud of disappointment. But I journey towards England, and I may there find consolation.

I am interrupted. What do these sounds portend? It is midnight; the breeze blows fairly, and the watch on deck scarcely stir. Again; there is a sound as of a human voice, but hoarser; it comes from the cabin where the remains of Frankenstein still lie. I must arise and examine. Good-night, my sister.

Walton finds the monster lamenting over the dead body of

his creator; his first impulse is to strike, but instead he listens to him.

Neither yours [Walton's] nor any man's death is needed to consummate the series of my being, and accomplish that which must be done; but it requires my own. *Do not think that I shall be slow to perform this sacrifice.* I shall quit your vessel on the ice-raft, and shall seek the most northern extremity of the globe; I shall collect my funeral pile, and consume to ashes this miserable frame.

Forgetful of Frankenstein's warning, Walton misses the opportunity of once and for all ridding the world of so abominable an abortion.

[The monster] sprung from the cabin window, . . . upon the ice-raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance.

CRITICAL ESTIMATE

ON its publication, *Frankenstein* received good notices; it was afforded plenty of space and treated seriously by the important Reviews. The critiques, as the extracts quoted below show, have certain features in common: the author is taken to be a man (a 'follower of Godwin' according to *Blackwood's*, Shelley himself according to the *Edinburgh*); the style is praised, both for its power and for its effectiveness in 'putting the story across'; and the plot, contrary to a modern estimate, attracts less attention for its originality than for its impiety. The disgust which the story appears to have aroused reads strangely to a generation whose demand for far worse horror is shamelessly supplied by bookselling 'crime clubs' and whose favourite form of inverted literary snobbery is to find recreation in reading 'thrillers'. *Frankenstein* may now be a classic and the debasement of literature laid at the door of 'mass production', but in 1820 the Good Old Times were already being lamented. Mrs. Piozzi wrote to Madame D'Arblay in October 1820: '... the wild and hideous tale of *Frankenstein*. How changed is the taste of verse,

¹ Quoted from M. Koszul, *La Jeunesse de Shelley*, 1910.

prose and painting since *le bon vieux temps*. Nothing attracts us but what terrifies and is within—if within—a hair's breadth of positive disgust.'

The *Quarterly*,¹ after a lengthy account of the story, went on:

Our readers will guess from this summary, what a tissue of horrible and disgusting absurdity this work presents.—It is piously dedicated to Mr. Godwin and is written in the spirit of his school. The dreams of insanity are embodied in the strong and striking language of the insane, and the author, notwithstanding the rationality of his preface, often leaves us in doubt whether he is not as mad as his hero. Mr. Godwin is the patriarch of a literary family, whose chief skill is in delineating the wanderings of the intellect, and which strangely delights in the most afflicting and humiliating of human miseries. His disciples are a kind of *out-pensioners of Bedlam* and, like 'Mad Bess' or 'Mad Tom', are occasionally visited with paroxysms of genius and fits of expression, which make sober-minded people wonder and shudder.

There follows 'a very favourable specimen of the vigour of fancy and language with which this work is written'. '... It cannot be denied that this is nonsense—but it is nonsense decked out with circumstances and clothed in language highly terrific: it is, indeed,

"a tale
Told by an ideot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.—"

but still there is something tremendous in the unmeaning hollowness of its sound, and the vague obscurity of its images.

But when we have thus admitted that *Frankenstein* has passages which appal the mind and make the flesh creep, we have given it all the praise (if praise it can be called) which we dare to bestow. Our taste and our judgment alike revolt at this kind of writing, and the greater the ability with which it may be executed the worse it is—it inculcates no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality; it cannot mend, and will not even amuse its readers, unless their taste have been deplorably vitiated—it fatigues the feelings without interesting the understanding; it gratuitously harasses the heart, and only adds to the store, already too great, of painful sensations. The author has powers, both of conception and language, which employed in a happier direction might, perhaps, (we speak dubiously,) give him a name among those whose writings amuse or amend their fellow-creatures.'

¹ *Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1818.

The *Edinburgh Magazine*,¹ in the course of a five-page review, wrote:

Here is one of the productions of the modern school in its highest style of caricature and exaggeration. It is formed on the Godwinian manner and has all the faults, but many likewise of the beauties of that model. In dark and gloomy views of nature and of man, bordering too closely on impiety,—in the most outrageous improbability,—in sacrificing everything to effect,—it even goes beyond its great prototype; but in return, it possesses a similar power of fascination, something of the same mastery in harsh and savage delineations of passion, relieved in like manner by the gentler features of domestic and simple feelings.

There never was a wilder story imagined; yet, like most of the fictions of this age, it has an air of reality attached to it, by being connected with the favourite projects and passions of the times. The real events of the world have, in our day, too, been of so wondrous and gigantic a kind,—the shiftings of the scenes in our stupendous drama have been so rapid and various, that Shakespeare himself, in his wildest flights, has been completely distanced by the eccentricities of actual existence. . . .

It is one of those works, however, which, when we have read, we do not well see why it should have been written;—for a *jeu d'esprit* it is somewhat too long, grave, and laborious,—and some of our highest and most reverential feelings receive a shock from the conception on which it turns, so as to produce a painful and bewildered state of mind while we peruse it. . . . It might, indeed, be the author's view to shew that the powers of man have been wisely limited, and that misery would follow their extension,—but still the expression, 'Creator', applied to a mere human being, gives us the same sort of shock with the phrase, 'the Man Almighty', and others of the same kind, in Mr. Southey's 'Curse of Kehama'.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,² after a long dissertation on 'works of fiction' in general and 'the class of marvellous romances' in particular, tells the story of the novel, with many quotations:

So concludes this extraordinary tale, in which the author seems to us to disclose uncommon powers of poetic imagination. The feeling with which we perused the unexpected and fearful, yet, allowing the possi-

¹ *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany, A new Series of the Scots Magazine*, Mar. 1818. These reviews can be consulted in the bound volumes of the magazines in the British Museum.

² *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, no. xii, vol. 11, Mar. 1818.

bility of the event, very natural conclusion of Frankenstein's experiment, shook a little even our firm nerves; although such and so numerous have been the expedients for exciting terror employed by the romantic writers of the age, that the reader may adopt Macbeth's words, with a slight alteration:

'We have supp'd full with horrors;
Direness, familiar to our "callous" thoughts,
Cannot once startle us.'

It is no slight merit in our eyes, that the tale, though wild in incident, is written in plain and forcible English, without exhibiting that mixture of hyperbolical Germanisms with which tales of wonder are usually told, as if it were necessary that the language should be as extravagant as the fiction. . . .

Upon the whole, the work impresses us with a high idea of the author's original genius and happy power of expression. We shall be delighted to hear that he had aspired to the *paullo majora*; and in the meantime, congratulate our readers upon a novel which excites new reflections and untold sources of emotion. If Gray's definition of Paradise, to lie on a couch, namely, and read new novels, come any thing near truth, no small praise is due to him, who, like the author of Frankenstein, has enlarged the sphere of that fascinating enjoyment.

Wonder that *Frankenstein* should have been written by a woman persists in reviews of the later novels; *Blackwood's*¹ thinks parts of *Valperga* 'unladylike'. 'It is impossible to read it [the chapter on Beatrice, her creed and love] without admiration of the eloquence with which it is written, or without sorrow that any English lady should be capable of clothing such thoughts in such words'; but the partial reviewer of *Lodore* in *Fraser's*² is able to praise it, because 'There is nothing in these volumes which a lady might not have known, and felt, and written; nor can there be the slightest doubt that they are the production of a feminine mind, albeit of robust culture and extraordinary vigour. . . . We were oftentimes reminded of the confessions of that charming enthusiast, Madame Roland—the only politician and philosopher in petticoats we could ever bring ourselves to regard with affectionate respect. . . .

'We are very happy in being able to confer this praise on Mrs. Shelley, whose name is dear to us (as we doubt not, from "the late

¹ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Mar. 1823.

² *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, Jan. 7th, 1835.

remorse of love", it is to the public), for the sake alike of the dead and living—her illustrious husband, and her living son, who was born in his image.'

Of *Valperga*, *Blackwood's*¹ wrote:

We opened the packet, which we knew to contain this book, with great expectations. Frankenstein, at the time of its appearance, we certainly did not suspect to be the work of a female hand; the name of Shelley was whispered, and we did not hesitate to attribute the book to *Mr.* Shelley. Soon, however, we were set right. We learned that Frankenstein was written by *Mrs.* Shelley; and then we most undoubtedly said to ourselves, 'For a man it was excellent, but for a woman it was wonderful.' . . .

After complaining, quite justly, that this Castruccio lacks the wit of Machiavelli's, and that the authoress too often holds up the story by parading her learning, the notice continues:

The attempt, whether successful or not, certainly is made to depict the slow and gradual formation of a crafty and bloody Italian tyrant of the middle ages, out of an innocent, open-hearted and deeply-feeling youth. We suspect, that in the whole of this portraiture, far too much reliance has been laid on thoughts and feelings, not only modern, but modern and feminine at once. Perhaps we might say more; nay, perhaps we should not be saying too much, if we plainly expressed the opinion, that a very great part of *Mrs.* Shelley's book has no inspiration but that of a certain *school*, which is certainly a very modern, as well as a very mischievous one, and which ought never, of all things, to have numbered ladies among its disciples.

Frankenstein's gift to the language of a popularly misquoted term has kept its name alive to generations who have never read the book.² It is of interest as a considerable *tour de force*, for Mary was only nineteen when she wrote it, but its importance in the history of the novel³ depends primarily on the originality of the plot and on the descendants for which it has been responsible.

¹ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Mar. 1823.

² A claim to have been the first to call the *monster* Frankenstein can be made for Trelawny, and probably for the same reason that has caused subsequent mistakes—failure to read the book! Cf. Letter to Claire, Nov. 27th, 1869. *Letters*, p. 222.

³ In chap. xi of the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. xii, in the course of an article on the Novel of Terror in the nineteenth century, the writer says, 'It was a woman . . . who produced the first work of genius to be found in this class of writings, *Frankenstein* or *The Modern Prometheus*.'

In its erection of a superstructure of fantasy on a foundation of circumstantial 'scientific' fact¹ ('the author opens a sort of account current with the reader; drawing upon him for credit to that degree of the marvellous which he proposes to employ', *Blackwood's*) it is the first of the Scientific Romances that have culminated in our day in the work of Mr. H. G. Wells; in this, as in its suggestion of deeper psychological and sociological implications underlying the story, *Frankenstein* marks an advance on the crude horror of the Radcliffe-Monk Lewis school. ¹But in other respects, in style and in characterization in particular, it is badly 'dated'; the digressions and the description of scenery that delay the unfolding of the story proper are not only obvious devices to pad out the story to the dimensions of a novel (on Shelley's advice), but are conventions of the time with little to recommend them. It is not for nothing that *The Sorrows of Werther* is among the first three books that the monster came across. Frankenstein's fastidiousness and hesitancy, in debt more to German sentimentality than to *Hamlet*, make the modern reader as impatient with him as he is incredulous of the blameless beauty of the heroine. It is not the monster who is unreal in *Frankenstein*, but the human beings. The heavy Gothic² diet, that Shelley was strong enough to assimilate and survive, permanently impaired Mary's weaker literary digestion.

If she had developed in *Frankenstein* and in the later novels the subtler psychology which she touched upon in the monster's *apologia* for his malignity, she would have taken a far higher rank as an artist; she would have been a novelist and not a 'fictioneer';³ but she was content to deal in the stock-in-trade of her generation, and consequently her high gifts of imagination and her command over language, worthy of better things, are lost in a neglect not wholly undeserved. *Frankenstein* remains a 'period piece', of not very good date; historically interesting, but not one of the living novels of the world.

¹ Charles Brockden Brown, the American, whose novels Shelley admired, 'rationalized' the horror element, and his *Wieland* may be considered a precursor of *Frankenstein* in this respect. The account of the desolation of plague in *Arthur Mervyn* may also have influenced Mary's description in *The Last Man*.

² *The Castle of Otranto*, by Walpole, was called on the title-page, 'A Gothic Story'. It is a convenient label for the style of the period.

³ For this distinction I am indebted to *The Arts To-day* (edited by G. Grigson).

I have dealt at length with *Frankenstein* as it is the only novel of Mary Shelley's whose reputation has survived, and criticism of it applies in general to her other work.

Lodore is valuable now as veiled biography, but as a novel is not as intrinsically interesting as *The Last Man*, which, in the present writer's opinion, has not received its deserts. Her imaginative powers in it, concentrated on achieving one effect, that of utter desolation, are more successfully employed than when they range more diffusely and stray into the grandiose and the sentimental. Her description of the devastation wrought by a plague which sweeps the world and brings in its train a break-down, more nightmarish than death itself, of the organization on which civilized existence depends takes on a heightened reality to a generation threatened by an extinction as complete from the man-made plague of war: there seems nothing fanciful in the wanderings of the surviving hero over a wrecked and deserted Europe. Besides biographical passages of interest, *The Last Man* also contains some curious minor prophecies: e.g. the reigning house adopts the name of Windsor, and to get to Scotland to see a friend Lionel engages a 'sailing balloon' which does the journey in '48 hours at farthest'. 'The pilot hardly moved the plumed steerage and the slender mechanism of the wings wide unfurled, gave forth a murmuring noise, soothing to the sense.'

The literary value of the remaining novels, *Falkner*, *Valperga*, *Perkin Warbeck*, is negligible; references have been made to them in the text where they supply biographical details, and full title-pages with dates of publication are given below.

TITLE-PAGES OF PROSE WORKS

NOVELS

Frankenstein; | or, | The Modern Prometheus. | In Three volumes. | Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay | To mould me man? Did I solicit thee | From darkness to promote me?—| *Paradise Lost*. | London: | Printed for | Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mayor, & Jones, | Finsbury Square. | 1818.

Valperga: | or, the | *Life and Adventures* | of | Castruccio, | Prince of Lucca. | *By the Author of 'Frankenstein'*. | In Three Volumes. | Vol. I. (*Vol. II, &c.*) London: | Printed for G. and W. B. Whittaker, | Ave-Maria-Lane. | 1823.

The Last Man. | by | The Author of *Frankenstein*. | In Three Volumes. | Let no man seek | Henceforth to be foretold what shall befall | Him or his children. | Milton. | London: | Henry Colburn, New Burlington Street. | 1826.

The | Fortunes | of | Perkin Warbeck, | A Romance. | By the | Author of '*Frankenstein*'. | J'ai vu filz d'Angleterre, Richard Richard d'Yorc nommé, | Que l'on disoit en terre, extinct et consommé, | Endurer grant souffrance; et par nobles exploitz, | Vivre en bonne esperance, d'estre Roy des Angloys. | *Old French Chronicle*. | In Three Volumes. | Vol. I. (*Vol. II, &c.*) | London: | Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, | New Burlington Street. | 1830.

Lodore. | By the | Author of '*Frankenstein*'. | *In the turmoil of our lives, | Men are like politic states, or troubled seas, | Tossed up and down with several storms and tempests, | Change and variety of wrecks and fortunes; | Till, labouring to the havens of our homes, | We struggle for the calm that crowns our ends.* | Ford. | In Three Volumes. | Vol. I. (*Vol. II, &c.*) | London: | Richard Bentley, New Burlington Street. | (Successor to Henry Colburn.) | 1835.

Falkner | A Novel | By | The Author of '*Frankenstein*'; | '*The Last Man*,' &c. | '—there stood | In record of a sweet sad story, | An altar, and a temple bright, | Circled by steps, and o'er the gate | Was sculptured, "To Fidelity!"' | Shelley. | In Three Volumes. | Vol. I. (*Vol. II, &c.*) | London | Saunders and Otley Conduit Street | 1837.

TRAVEL

History | of | A Six Weeks' Tour | Through | A Part of France, | Switzer-
land, Germany, and Holland : | with Letters | Descriptive of | A Sail
around the Lake of Geneva, and of | The Glaciers of Chamouni. |
London : | Published by T. Hookham, Jun. | Old Bond Street ; | And
C. and J. Ollier, Welbeck Street. | 1817.

Rambles | in | Germany and Italy, | in | 1840, 1842, and 1843. | By | Mrs.
Shelley. | In Two Volumes. | London : | Edward Moxon, Dover Street. |
MDCCCXLIV.

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Lives in 'Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain and
Portugal'. Lardner, *The Cabinet Cyclopaedia*, 1835.

Lives in 'Eminent Literary and Scientific Men in France'. Lardner,
The Cabinet Cyclopaedia, 1838.

SHORT STORIES¹

Tales and Stories by M. W. Shelley now first collected with an intro-
duction by R. Garnett, 1891.

¹ In the Keats Museum, Hampstead, there is the manuscript of a story (about 6,500 words) by Mary Shelley called 'The Heir of Mondolfo' which had hitherto been considered to be unpublished and was deposited there in that belief by the owner, Professor Kenneth G. Brooks. I have since found the following evidence of its publication in *Notes and Queries*. In answer to a query on Feb. 12th, 1876, Mr. H. Buxton Forman wrote on May 5th, 1877 (*N. & Q.*, 5th Series, vii), 'If Fitz is still anxious to know where this story of Mrs. Shelley's may be seen in print, he will find it on looking into *Appleton's Journal* (New York) for January last.' Professor Jones has kindly sent me the following particulars: 'It was published in *Appleton's Journal* (new series, vol. ii, January 1877, pp. 12-23) under Mary's full name and with this foot-note by the editor at the bottom of p. 12: "This posthumous story by Mrs. Shelley has not before appeared in print. It was found among the unpublished papers of Leigh Hunt and is authenticated by S. R. Townshend Mayer, Esq., Editor of *St. James Magazine*, London."'

CHRONOLOGY

- 1797 *August 30th.* Mary born at The Polygon, Somers Town. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, dies a week afterwards.
- 1801 William Godwin, Mary's father, marries Mrs. Clairmont. Her children are Charles and Jane, afterwards called Clara or Claire.
- 1803 A child, William, born to William Godwin and his wife.
- 1805 Godwin sets up in business as a publisher of children's books, M. J. Godwin & Co.
- 1807 The family move into new business premises in Skinner Street, Holborn.
- 1812 Mary goes to Dundee to stay with the Baxters. Robert Baxter and Charles Clairmont work in Constable's printing office in Edinburgh.
- 1813 Mary back in London. In June returns to Dundee.
- 1814 Mary home at Skinner Street.
May 5th. Shelley calls. Beginning of friendship.
July 28th. Mary and Claire leave with Shelley for France.
Till September 14th. On 'A Six Weeks' Tour' in France, Switzerland, and Germany.
November 30th. Birth of Harriet's child, Charles Bysshe.
- 1815 *January.* Sir Bysshe Shelley dies and Shelley is able to come to terms with his father, now Sir Timothy.
January 22nd. Mary has her first child prematurely; it dies before two weeks old.
May 13th. Claire leaves for lodgings at Lynmouth.
June. Mary and Shelley visit south Devonshire, and Mary stays at Clifton while Shelley looks for a house.
August. Settled at Bishopgate. Expedition with Peacock and Charles Clairmont to the source of the Thames.
- 1816 *January 24th.* A son, William, born to Mary and Shelley.
March. Publication of Shelley's *Alastor*. Claire returns and in London makes acquaintance of Byron.
May. Mary, Shelley, and Claire leave for Geneva, where Byron arrives later. Mary begins *Frankenstein*.
July. Mary, Shelley, and Claire visit the Valley of Chamonix.
August 29th. Leave for England. Shelley goes to stay with Peacock at Great Marlow and Mary goes with Claire to Bath.

- 1816 *October 11th.* Fanny commits suicide by taking poison in hotel at Swansea.
December 10th. Harriet's body found in the Serpentine.
December 29th. Shelley marries Mary at St. Mildred's in the City of London. Godwins reconciled.
- 1817 *January 12th.* Birth of Allegra, first called Alba, daughter of Claire and Byron.
March. Move into Albion House, Marlow.
March 27th. Lord Eldon gives judgement against Shelley in Chancery suit to obtain possession of his children by Harriet.
September 2nd. A daughter, Clara, born to Mary and Shelley.
- 1818 *January.* Publication of Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*.
February. Leave Marlow for London.
March 9th. Christening of William, Clara Everina, Clara Allegra.
March 11th. Leave for the Continent. Publication of *Frankenstein*.
April 28th. Allegra is sent to Byron at Venice. Travel through Parma, Modena, Bologna.
May 9th. Arrive at Leghorn. Call on the Gisbornes. Shelley finds manuscript story of the Cenci.
June. Settled at Bagni di Lucca.
August 17th. Shelley goes with Claire to Venice to persuade Byron to let her see Allegra.
August 30th. Mary travels with baby Clara from Bagni di Lucca to join Shelley at Este, where Byron has offered to lend his villa for Allegra to visit them.
September 24th. Death of baby Clara at Venice.
October. Travel to the South.
November 20th. Arrive in Rome.
December 1st. Stay at Naples.
- 1819 *March.* Back in Rome.
April. Meet Miss Curran. Shelley, Mary, Claire, and William sit to her for portraits.
June 7th. Death of William.
June 12th. Leave Rome for Leghorn. An edition of *The Cenci* is published there.
November 12th. Birth of a son, Percy Florence, to Mary and Shelley, at Florence.
- 1820 *January.* Move to Pisa. *The Cenci* is published in London, also *Prometheus Unbound*. Meet the Masons.
June. At Casa Ricci, Leghorn, the Gisbornes' villa, for lawsuit with Paolo.

August. Move to Casa Prinni at the Baths of S. Giuliano di Pisa.

October. Tom Medwin, Shelley's cousin, visits them. Move to Casa Galetti on Lung' Arno in Pisa. Meet Prince Mavrocordato. Professor Pacchiani introduces Emilia Viviani.

1821 *January.* Arrival of Edward and Jane Williams. Shelley begins boating with Edward. *Epipsychidion* published anonymously.

April. Return to the Baths. The Williamses are five miles off at Pugnano.

July. Printing of *Adonais* in Pisa.

August. Shelley visits Byron at Ravenna.

October. Move to Tre Palazzi di Chiesa on the Lung' Arno, Pisa, where the Williamses join them in lower flat. Byron comes later to Casa Lanfranchi.

September. Mary's novel *Castruccio* (afterwards published as *Valperga*) sent by Shelley to Ollier.

1822 *January 14th.* First meeting with Trelawny. Publication of Shelley's *Hellas*. Mary sends *Castruccio* to Godwin to dispose of and keep profits.

April 19th. Death of Allegra.

May 1st. The Shelleys and Williamses settle at Lerici in Casa Magni.

June 6th. Claire comes to stay. Mary's miscarriage.

July 1st. Shelley, Williams, Roberts, and the boy Charles Vivian sail in the *Ariel* to Leghorn to greet the Leigh Hunts coming to stay with Byron in order to edit a new paper, *The Liberal*.

July 8th. Shelley, Williams, and the boy sail from Leghorn. Trelawny and Roberts in the *Bolivar* are sent back to port by customs officials. The *Ariel* is lost, either in the storm or run down by a felucca.

July 12th. Mary and Jane decide to go to Pisa for news. They see Byron and Trelawny, but, as there is then no news, return.

July 19th. Trelawny hears from Roberts that bodies have been found washed ashore. He breaks the news to Mary and Jane.

August 16th. Burning of Shelley's body on the sea-shore by Trelawny; Byron and Leigh Hunt also present.

September. Mary with Percy Florence and Jane Williams with her children go to Genoa to join the Hunts. Claire goes to her brother Charles at Vienna.

September 17th. Jane leaves for England.

1823 *January.* Sir Timothy Shelley offers guardianship of Percy Florence if Mary will part with him. She refuses.

June. Byron will not pay his debt to Mary, and she borrows from Trelawny to journey to England.

- 1823 *August 25th.* Mary returns and stays with the Godwins, in the Strand. *Frankenstein* played at the Opera House as a one-act play, *Presumption.*
- 1824 Publication of Shelley's *Posthumous Poems.* Mary lives in Kentish Town, near Jane Williams. Negotiations for allowance from Sir Timothy.
April 19th. Death of Byron.
- 1825 *January.* Mary receives £100 per annum from Sir Timothy.
- 1826 Publication of *The Last Man.* Sir Timothy temporarily stops supplies.
September 14th. Death of Harriet's son Charles Bysshe, which leaves Percy heir to the baronetcy.
- 1827 Jane Williams 'marries' Jefferson Hogg and slanders Mary; break in friendship. Meets Frances Wright. Friendship begins with Tom Moore.
- 1828 Visit to Paris. Mary contracts small-pox and is nursed there by Julia Robinson.
July. Trelawny returns to England. Also Claire, on holiday from Russia. Charles Clairmont in England.
- 1829 Friendships at John Murray's; also with Lord Dillon, Rogers, Hon. Mrs. Norton, Beauclerc family, and the Dean Pauls.
March. Trelawny asks for material for biography of Shelley, which Mary refuses to supply.
- 1830 Publication of *Perkin Warbeck*; also short stories for *The Keepsake.*
- 1831 Negotiations with Colburn for publication of Trelawny's *Adventures of a Younger Son.*
- 1832 Writing *Lives* in Italian series of Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopaedia.*
July. Visit of Trelawny's daughter Zellâ. Death of Lord Dillon. Death of Godwin's son William.
Struggle to send Percy Florence to Harrow, as Sir Timothy refuses to increase allowance.
- 1833 *April.* Mary goes to live at Harrow to send Percy to the school as day-boy.
Trelawny leaves for America.
- 1834 Godwin given small Government pension and house in 'Palace of Westminster'.

- 1835 Publication of *Lodore*, which is a great success.
Return of Trelawny.
Death of the Gisbornes.
- 1836 *April*. Death of Godwin. Application to Melbourne to continue the pension to Mrs. Godwin.
- 1837 Publication of *Falkner*.
- 1838 Attempts at biography of Shelley and editing poems.
- 1839 Publication of Shelley's *Poems*, with notes.
Break in friendship with Trelawny.
- 1840 Publication of Shelley's *Prose Remains*; also *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* [see 1814]. Sir Timothy settles £400 per annum on Percy Florence.
June. Mary accompanies Percy and two college friends abroad.
November. Returns to England.
- 1841 Abroad again in the summer; cure at Kissingen, thence to Prague, Tyrol, Venice.
- 1843 Winter in Florence. April in Rome. May-June, Sorrento. December in Paris on way back to England.
- 1844 Publication of *Rambles in Germany and Italy*, dedicated to Samuel Rogers.
Death of Sir Timothy Shelley; legacies from Shelley's will paid to Hogg, Claire, Leigh Hunt.
- 1847 Meeting with Jane, daughter of Thomas Gibson, widow of the Hon. Charles Robert St. John.
- 1848 *June 22nd*. Percy marries Jane St. John.
- 1850 Field Place left on grounds of health and Boscombe Manor purchased. Mary too weak to be moved there.
- 1851 *February 1st*. Death of Mary at Chester Square. Burial in Bournemouth churchyard.

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¹ I have given references to this collection and emendations from the less accessible Julian edition.

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